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L I V E S

OF THE

QUEENS OF ENGLAND

BEFORE THE

NORMAN CONQUEST.





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BY

MRS. MATTHEW HALL.



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country, is there a page to be found more glorious than that devoted to the British St. Helena, the Empress-mother of Constantine the Great, the self-devoted wife, the patroness of Christianity, the discoverer of the true cross, the builder of churches, the mother of the oppressed,—the glorious career of whose influence has, in a thousand ways, directly and indirectly, descended to our own times with her name and history? Deeply contrasted with these incidents are those forming the groundwork of the life of Boadicea, in whom we behold an instance of the native simplicity of a Briton by birth and education: her fine womanly nature, aroused by unheard-of wrongs to revolt against tyranny and injustice, burst forth, like a torrent which deluged the whole land with blood, into that train of actions which had nearly quenched forever the power of Rome in this island. The family details of Boadicea's history, of whom much has been written, have never before appeared in connection with her life, and without the knowledge of these it is impossible fairly to appreciate the exciting details of her sufferings as woman, wife, and mother—in the delineation of *her* character, no fiction can arrive at the all-powerful force of simple truth.

Passing over Rowena, through whom was introduced the Saxon sway, we may remark that it was to the most excellent and pious Queen Bertha, a Frenchwoman of royal rank, that we were indebted for the primeval establishment of Christianity in Saxon Britain. That faith had, indeed, at an earlier period been introduced and cherished by royalty, but had fallen into disuse. From the time, however, when Bertha set the example, queens and princesses stood forth as the champions of the new creed: it became then *fashionable* to be a Christian; and that same land which had alone, through the merciful intervention of St. Helena, escaped the persecution of Dioclesian, became distinguished for examples of holy votaries to the faith of Christ. Not content with exercising every domestic and social virtue themselves, these Saxon females animated their husbands and lovers to a similar self-devotion in the cause of religion. Many, indeed, of these sceptred women dedicated their whole existence to a religious state of seclusion. Then it was that kings laid aside their crowns and robes of state, and, assuming the monastic garb, at the exhortation of their royal partners, undertook pilgrimages to the Holy See,



founded schools or endowed churches, which yet remain to attest their munificence. Such was the spirit which pervaded the Saxon Heptarchy, though the picture had sometimes its dark reverse, as in the characters of Quendrida and Ermenburga—and later still, the singularly beautiful and wicked Elfrida. Each of these royal ladies, whether good or bad actions marked her career, has her own appropriate niche in the annals of the past; and possessed her peculiar influence over the times in which she lived—an influence more or less descending to our remote age, though in few does the benefit conferred on society shine more conspicuously than in that gentle and amiable queen, mother of Alfred the Great, by whose beneficent attention to the education of her sons, some of the brightest rays of light have been shed on our English literature.

Such are a few of the leading features of a period comparatively unknown, and which cannot fail, it is hoped, to prove a useful study to those who desire an introduction to the History of England; for these personal records of the wives and daughters of our early monarchs, form naturally the connecting links between many public events which would otherwise remain detached and unintelligible.

The history of British female Sovereigns before the period of the Conquest had necessarily to be drawn from chronicles which present many legendary records, and which grave writers have sometimes rejected, perhaps too unsparingly; for, as a learned translator\* has observed, even legends are of value in recording the history of past times, and in them the germ of important events connected with the establishment and progress of religion may be found. But for the Sagas we should know little of the early habits of northern nations; and to more than one ballad are we indebted for an historical fact, which might otherwise have been forgotten. To the perseverance and study of recluses, who spent their whole lives in producing one work, we owe much gratitude; that they were generally guided by a spirit of truth we cannot doubt, as they were aware that their labours would become known to many a contemporary and rival in whose power it was,

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\* Benj. Thorpe, F. S. A.; Introduction to Lappenberg's Anglo-Saxons.

even at that day, to confute a writer, if he asserted more than had been handed down by tradition: at all periods there were critics as well as authors, and, as almost every monastery could boast of its learned historian, there was no want of jealous observation of the productions of their literary brethren amongst the monks who filled up their leisure with similar pursuits.

To the bards, who sang their compositions from country to country, was intrusted the sacred task of relating great events: they kept alive in their songs the valiant deeds of heroes; their lays were faithfully repeated by the scribes, who committed them to writing, and, as time wore on, chroniclers sprang up, who, by diligent study, were able to understand and explain much that had become obscure to the uninitiated. The famous Abbey of Glastonbury produced the earliest historian of Britain, who, in the middle of the sixth century, set an example, followed almost uninterruptedly in other monasteries through several ages, till the little less than miraculous invention of printing rendered learning and information easy.

Milton, our greatest and most erudite poet, did not disdain the old legends of the early chroniclers, and has preserved in his history much that it is delightful to read of, and pleasant to believe; and our immortal dramatist sought at the same sources the subjects on which to frame his glorious imaginings.

From the lays of the Welsh bards, from Gildas, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, down to the latest publications which have thrown light on the history of the early British reigns, nothing has been neglected in the work now presented to the public which might conduct to truth, and offer a clear and interesting series of records of those female Sovereigns whose lives are so much less familiar to the English reader than others of a later period, who have found able recent biographers.

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\* The name of the Empress Victoria's husband has not been handed down to posterity.



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# LIVES

OF

## BRITISH QUEENS

### BEFORE THE CONQUEST.

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#### CARTISMANDUA.

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THE first British Queen, whose life offers any interest, after the Roman Invasion, is Cartismandua.

She is said to have been great-grand-daughter of King Lud, the eldest of the seven sons of Beli the Great, the heroes of the famous bards, Aneurin, Taliesin, Llywarch Hên, and their followers, whose compositions may be ascribed to the sixth century.<sup>1</sup>

Lud is a favorite with early chroniclers, and his name is preserved somewhat conspicuously in that of the capital of England.<sup>2</sup>

The father of Cartismandua was Mandubratius, or Afarwy, the son of Imanuentius, Prince of the Trinobantes, or people of Middlesex and Essex, whose contentions with the victorious Cassivellaunus, or Caswallon, led to the devastation of the country and the successes of the Romans.

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<sup>1</sup> Lappenberg's Hist. of England under the Anglo-Saxon kings.

<sup>2</sup> Nennius, Abbot of Bangor, wrote his *Historia Britonum* about the year 858, and speaks of earlier works to which he was indebted. He is indignant at the name of Troynovant being replaced by that of Lud's Town, as he insists on the tradition, of which the Britons were long proud, of a descent from Brutus, grandson of Æneas; "a fabulous national tradition of Rome;" observes Dr. Lappenberg, "with the faded tinsel of which the vain Britons adorned themselves," in appropriating it to their own nation.

Afarwy had made overtures to Cæsar in Gaul, offering him the means of a second attempt on the country, which offer was gladly accepted; and Afarwy and his son Scæva, together with thirty others of his relations and adherents, placed themselves in the hands of the Romans as hostages, and afterwards accompanied the conqueror on his return to Rome, when Cassivellaunus had been forced to submit to the yoke of the powerful strangers, whose absence from his country he sacrificed much to obtain.

It is not known whether Afarwy had a wife with him when he quitted Britain; but it is supposed that, if so, after her death he espoused a Roman lady, according to the policy adopted by Cæsar, to secure the friendship of the islanders. Cartismandua, there is reason to think,<sup>1</sup> was the offspring of this second marriage, and it was in Rome that she married her cousin Cymbeline, one of the hostages, who, being in due time called back to Britain to assume the royal sway, was accompanied by his bride on his return to the land of his nativity.

Although no particulars of the childhood of the daughter of Afarwy have been handed down to us, the early years of Cymbeline, her husband, have not been suffered to rest in the shade by historians. The hero of Britain, as he afterwards became, and who has been made familiar to us by Shakspeare, was, when a British hostage, educated in Rome, that most polished of cities, and, like the youths his companions in the same circumstances, received eventually an appointment suitable to his rank. Various offices were indeed assigned to the Britons.

Cicero, with true Roman contempt, speaks of Britain in his time as a country from which slaves only could be procured,—alluding to certain captives who had been sent by their conquerors to the circus, where, no doubt, their novel appearance would at that day excite as much interest as any barbarian exhibited on our own stage would do; or the orator might speak in reference to certain Britains appointed to carry the litter of the Emperor,—a post certainly, if ignoble, requiring fidelity to his person. Cymbeline could scarcely be included in Cicero's contemptuous notice, for he not only received a noble education, but was appointed to attend in person on the Emperor Augustus in his wars; in which service he became so distinguished for his valour, that he was rewarded with the honor of knighthood, which carried with it certain peculiar and enviable distinctions.

The Eques, or Roman knight, was permitted to wear rings on his fingers, which no inferior person might display. He was also entitled to wear a dress embroidered with broad guards and studs of purple, which, together with the horse he rode, were provided by the Senate. The British coins of Cymbeline bear the horse-rampant, which shows how proudly the prince regarded the Imperial favour. The Roman knight who had, like Cymbeline, conducted himself valiantly in time of war, *if a stranger and auxiliary*, as in his case, was rewarded with a chain of gold, while a citizen of Rome could only gain a silver one by his valour. By such distinctions the Roman emperors attached foreigners to their service,—a

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<sup>1</sup> Carte. Roberts' British History.



politic measure, as was proved by the firmness with which the husband of Cartismandua continued friendly to the Roman interest.

An especial dignity was also enjoyed by the wives of the knights of Rome: to this Cartismandua must necessarily have been admitted. The knowledge of the early associations of the future Queen of the Britons may serve to explain, in some degree, many of the circumstances of her after-life. She was brought up in all the pomp and splendour of a luxurious court, with the throne of Augustus ever before her eyes, and the riches, glory, and honours of the Roman nation continually present to her view. At that time, love of dress and display was carried to a most inordinate height in the Imperial City, and we find Pliny reproving with indignation the monstrous disorders which had crept into the world, following up his remonstrances thus: "But say that women may be allowed to wear as much gold as they will, in bracelets, in rings on every finger-joint, in carcanets about their necks, in earrings pendent at their ears, in stays, wreaths, and chin-bands; let them have their chains of gold as large as they list under their arms, or cross over their sides, scarf-wise; and say that gentlewomen and mistresses may have their collars of gold thickly beset and garnished with massive pearls, pendent at their neck, beneath their waist; that even in their beds, when they should sleep, they may remember what a weight of gold they carry about them; must they therefore wear gold upon their feet, as it were to establish a third estate of women, answerable to the order of knights, between the matrons or dames of honour, and the wives of mean commoners?" From this passage it would appear that golden ornaments on the feet were permitted to Roman knights,—a privilege no doubt prized by all who formed part of the community. Cartismandua, among the rest of the ladies who were married to Roman knights, must have incurred the censure of the historian. It is not surprising, on reflecting to what a height of luxury the ladies of the period had arrived, that in after-times she should have disdained the simple manners of her uncultivated British subjects; and she may be excused if her heart should have reverted and clung in later years to those among whom she had known her earliest enjoyments. The love of splendour in dress must have become habitual to her, and it was but natural that she should sigh for scenes of gaiety so congenial to youth. Cartismandua cannot justly be blamed for this weakness so common to her sex and breeding, nor can it be imputed to her as a crime that she preserved to the last day of her existence her faithful attachment to Rome. This latter feeling was also strongly inculcated and reciprocated by Cymbeline, who is said to have made himself so dear to the Emperor that he was saluted by the honourable title of "Friend to the Commonwealth;" and on his return to Britain, Augustus granted him permission either to pay or receive remittance of the tribute imposed by Cæsar on the Britons, according to his own pleasure. Cymbeline did not avail himself of the generous offer, being desirous to preserve the friendship of the Romans, and to secure for the British youth an opportunity of continuing to make their residence at the capital, where there were so many opportunities of obtaining an enlightened education, the advantage of which he had himself fully experienced.

It would be curious to follow the route of Cartismandua and her husband, in that early age of Britain's annals, when they journeyed towards the land over which the death of Tenantius, Afarwy's brother, had called them to rule. There were then no facilities of travel, and the difficulties were greater than we can now well conceive. The usual passage from Gaul to Britain appears to have been from Boulogne, in Belgic Gaul, to Sandwich, or from Calais to Dover as at the present day. There has been a question as to what description of vessel was used for the service of passing the narrow seas; but those antiquaries who contend for the *coracle*, a frail bark only used for rivers, could have been but little aware of the nature of the Channel. There were, probably, vessels of sufficient weight and power to render the navigation comparatively easy to less experienced sailors than our own; and, of course, all the resources of art, as it then existed, would have been employed, that the royal pair should arrive on their own shores with becoming pomp.

But it was probably at the port of Dowgate,<sup>1</sup> on the Thames at London, that Cartismandua and her husband landed, and from that spot commenced a triumphant entry into the city in one of those chariots, gorgeously painted and adorned with silver, which historians have described with minuteness.<sup>2</sup>

As Cymbeline was a Roman knight, the distinguished friend of Augustus, and a descendant of their own royal family, both himself and Cartismandua must have been welcomed by the Britons with every honour which it was possible for them to offer.

Lud's Town, or London, had even then arisen to considerable importance as "the resort of merchants" and residence of the chief of the Trinobantes, of which state it was the capital. It is said to have contained more dwellings than any other town in Britain; and simple as these were as far as architecture is concerned, they were important in their kind: the Britons did not employ stone for the construction of their dwellings till taught the art of architecture by Agricola,<sup>3</sup> nor was glass used for architectural purposes till some time after the Saxon invasion. The feeling which touched the heart of the noble Caractacus, when he viewed the Roman splendour, might have cast a shade on that of Cartismandua when she first beheld her own future regal abode. Caractacus is said to have exclaimed: "How is it possible that a people possessed

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<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Mauda, Queen of Connaught, the contemporary of Cartismandua, is described as leading her troops to battle, seated in an open chariot, with her crown of gold on her head: [Cæsar brought with him from Britain a corslet richly adorned with British pearls, which he dedicated to Venus. This was one of the spoils which gave the Romans an idea of the riches of Britain. The Scottish and Irish kings wore crowns of gold.] the royal car which conveyed her being accompanied by four chariots, one before, another behind, and two on either side, attended by a great retinue of chariots and horses; while the Queen herself is described as having been apprehensive lest she should contaminate or defile the golden crown and her royal robes with the dust raised by the horses' feet, or the foam proceeding from the mouths of the fiery steeds. See O'Halloran, O'Flaherty, &c., and "Titles of Honour."

<sup>3</sup> Howel.

of such magnificence at home, could envy me a humble cottage in Britain!" The rough warrior had passed his whole life amid these humble, yet, to him, happy abodes of barbarians, whom Diodorus describes at this time as characterised by simplicity, integrity, temperance, and a proneness to dissension. Caractacus looked only on their noble qualities; but Cartismandua had quitted all that art, wealth, and luxury could combine to make life enviable, and like a tender exotic, had been removed from that warm and genial soil, to breathe the air of a land, the customs of which were opposed to all her habits, and which reminded her at each fresh step of what she had left behind; that she shrunk from her allotted destiny, was not therefore surprising.

The royal residence of Dinas Beli, the Palace or Court of Belinus,<sup>1</sup> was a structure in Lud's Town, which extended over the Broken Wharf into the city, till it approached the Gate of Belinus, its royal founder, brother of the Brennus who headed the Gauls and sacked Rome in the time of Camillus. The words Ludgate and Billingsgate<sup>2</sup> are familiar in our own days; and Holinshed assures us, that in his time there were yet remaining the ruins of the Old Palace of Belinus, which had been patched up and converted into warehouses. Belinus's gate was on the banks of the Thames, and is said to have been once surmounted by the king's image, while his ashes were preserved in a golden urn contained in the gateway, beneath which was a haven or quay for ships, it being one of the chief gates or entrances into the capital. Livy, the historian of the Court of Augustus,<sup>3</sup> and contemporary of Cymbeline and Cartismandua, has related the history of Brennus, brother of King Belinus, as Plutarch has also done in his account of Camillus. In the Palace of Dinas Beli, probably, the royal pair were accordingly installed as their future residence.

One of the first acts of Cymbeline in Britain, was to issue an entirely new coinage of tribute-money, bearing the initials of his own name; which was a great advance in art for the Britons, who, up to that time, had been accustomed to use rings of brass and iron, wrought to certain degrees of value, for money,<sup>4</sup> as had been customary among the early Greeks. Many specimens of the coins of Cymbeline, his head crowned with a diadem of pearls, may still be seen in the cabinets of antiquaries. No less than forty gold, silver, and copper coins of this king, of different dies and moulds, have been discovered, — a proof of the extent to which coinage was carried in his reign.<sup>5</sup> Cymbeline is thought to have derived the art itself from his intercourse with the Romans: certain it is, that civilization,<sup>6</sup> during his reign, increased with rapid strides in the land under his rule.

The inscription Cimog on some of the coins of Cymbeline, gave rise to the Cemog, or Denarius, which may be considered the only coin which has a truly British name; and the word TASCIO on the reverse, signifies the Mint or Treasury.

<sup>1</sup> Humphrey Llwyd's Breviary of Britain.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Milton.

<sup>4</sup> Rapin.

<sup>5</sup> Pegge's Essay on the Coins of Cunobelinus.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. P. Roberts on the Early History of the Cymry, or Ancient Britons. Britton and Brayley.



Cymbeline was the first British monarch who stamped his image upon his coins, sometimes with two faces, like Janus, whose temple was closed during his reign. Six of these coins have the obverse only, with the inscription CUNO; and two more, one of which was only found in March, 1849,<sup>1</sup> among a number of gold coins, at the Whaddon Chase, have upon them a horse and wreath; that which was last discovered, was in weight 180 grains; on the reverse was a horse-rampant, an evident allusion to the dignity enjoyed by Cymbeline as a Roman Eques; and on the obverse was a thistle or ear of wheat, doubtless an intimation that corn was supplied to the Romans with the tribute-money.

As the greater number of the coins of Cymbeline have been dug up near Colchester, and bear, besides the monarch's initials of CUNO, the letters CAMY upon them, it is thought that that city was the royal seat of power, as indeed is expressly stated by Dion Cassius. Malden in Essex, and Malton in Yorkshire, have laid claim to being, in former times, the royal residence of British monarchs,<sup>2</sup> each having borne the name of Camalodunum — a mark that Cymbeline at some period resided there,<sup>3</sup> and that the town so named was capital of some district belonging to him: thus, not only were there several Camalodunums, but several cities bearing the name of Venta; Norwich was the Venta or Winchester of the Iceni, and Winchester, now known by the name, was Venta of the Wiccii.

No remains of antiquity can perhaps better convey to the mind the choice of situation selected by our early ancestors for the abode of monarchy, than that spot amidst the Chiltern Hills, in Rockinghamshire, where still appears a high circular mound or keep, in circumference about eighty paces, known to the present day as "Kimble's Castle;"<sup>4</sup> while a little adjacent village bears the same king's name, in defiance of the wreck of time and lapse of centuries. The romantic situation of this strong post would no doubt render it a favourite residence of the Romanized monarch Cymbeline and his consort. From the summit of Belinsbury Hill, which constituted a part of the territory adjacent to this ancient British fortress, we may imagine the eyes of Queen Cartismandua roving at pleasure over an almost boundless prospect of surpassing beauty. In which of the royal British abodes Cartismandua lived is, however, uncertain; or where her children, namely, five sons and one daughter, were brought up.

Adminius, the eldest son, in after times, having offended his father, was exiled the country; on which he placed himself under the protection of Caligula, then Emperor of Rome, who, at his suggestion, undertook that fictitious invasion of Britain, which terminated in the gathering a

<sup>1</sup> Bucks Herald, March 17, 1849.

<sup>2</sup> Allen's History of York.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Henry assures us that Cymbeline held his court at Malden, which was formerly celebrated for its beauty and magnificence, though only two Roman coins have been found in its vicinity, one of which is held so precious that it is carefully guarded by the bailiffs of the town; both are of the time of the Emperor Claudius.

<sup>4</sup> "The ancient name of the village of Kimble, whenever it occurs in our records, is written Kynebel or Cunobel, and in the Domesday Book is Chenebella."—*Lysons*.

few shells<sup>1</sup> on the coast of Gaul, with which he triumphantly returned to Rome. After this, no more is heard of Adminius, but the Roman writers extol his merits, with those of his brother Togodumnus, who befriended their interest; while they preserve a profound silence as to Arviragus<sup>2</sup> and Guiderius, their brothers, who became afterwards bitter enemies of Rome, and for whose actions our own native historians are the authorities.

This circumstance must have embittered, in no small degree, the domestic happiness of Cartismandua and her family; for the son, who thus disappointed their hopes, was the first-born, and heir to the name and royal honours of the house of Cymbeline. That good king himself, nevertheless, preserved his faith unbroken with Rome during a long reign, which passed usefully to his subjects, and peacefully to both himself and them. Indeed, peace and plenty seem to have marked the era of Cymbeline; yet prosperity did not corrupt him, as is too commonly the case; and it may be presumed that the married life of Cartismandua and her lord, glided smoothly and serenely on with the fair current of time. After a long and glorious reign, Cymbeline died, much regretted by his people; his death being, as they rightly judged, a national loss.

Cartismandua was no longer young at the time of becoming a widow; for her husband had reigned as many as fifty years, according to some authorities.<sup>3</sup>

It was customary in Britain, on the death of a monarch, for his widow or daughter to succeed to the government, if there were no sons; but in this case, there being several princes to inherit the dominions of Cymbeline, they were divided into three portions, of which one was given to Togodumnus, another to Caractacus, while the third portion fell to the widow, their mother. It is, however, uncertain whether either of these states was considered tributary to the other as a minor principality. Laws of Adminius, the eldest of Cartismandua's children, have also been found; but this would rather lead us to suppose he had possessed some share of power during his father's life, and tributary to him, prior to the event of his banishment, which might have led to the act of rebellion that occasioned his father's displeasure.

The territory inhabited by the Iceni<sup>4</sup> was the district which fell to the share of Cartismandua; and this is the first time that a people afterwards so celebrated are named in our histories, Cymbeline being expressly said to have been "King of the Iceni," and the Iceni themselves are mentioned as having studiously laboured to preserve their amity with the Romans.

Norfolk and Suffolk, afterwards distinguished by the name of East Anglia during the Saxon Heptarchy, may be considered as the property by right of inheritance of Cartismandua, and where she probably retired on her widowhood.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Henry.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis's History of Great Britain.

<sup>3</sup> Rapin and Henry say Cymbeline reigned thirty-five years: he died, according to Morant, A.D. 42.

<sup>4</sup> Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge, and Huntingdon.



The Icenî were not less likely to be faithful allies of Rome, now that Cartismandua reigned over them; and it may be remarked that female government was exceedingly popular at all times in Britain.<sup>1</sup> The fact of the near vicinity of this British district to that part of the country known under the name of Brigantia led to very important results, and opened out a train of events which involved in agitation all the subsequent period of Cartismandua's life. The latent ambition of the character of Cartismandua appeared, unrepressed, after her widowhood; for such must have been the motive which actuated her in her union, shortly after Cymbeline's death, with the Chief of the Brigantes. The mother, by Cymbeline, of a numerous family, Cartismandua could not have wanted scope for the exercise of her affections, and at her mature age, no other reason can be assigned than that she desired still to extend her power. The noble character of Cadallan, Prince of the Brigantes, it must be confessed, might well have won her affection, and may have swayed her choice. Whatever the motive on either side might be, this alliance was entered into, and from that time Cartismandua becomes known to future history as Queen of the Brigantes.

The celebrated district called Brigantia or Galloway, consisted of the large portion of country which extended from the mouth of the Humber to the wall afterwards built by Adrian across the whole breadth of the island, and was inhabited by a chosen body of the Scottish nation, appointed to guard this frontier province from the incursions of the southern Britons, then considered their mortal enemies. This brave, hardy, and adventurous people were distinguished above every other British tribe for their love of liberty, and fought to maintain it as late as the eightieth year of the Christian era, long after all their fellow-countrymen had submitted to the Roman empire.

Brigantia contained many places of great strength and importance, amongst which were Aldborough or Iseur, in Yorkshire, Eboracum or York, afterwards the seat of Roman power in Britain, Carictonium, and Epiakæ.<sup>2</sup>

Cadallan, chief of the Brigantes, the new husband of the widowed Queen of Cymbeline, was guardian of the young King of the Scots; he had been formerly married to Europeia, a sister of Metallanus, afterwards king, by whom he had several children, the eldest of whom was the famous hero, Caractacus, and the youngest, Boadicea, afterwards so celebrated for her heroism and misfortunes.<sup>3</sup> It is rather remarkable that two princes should have been conspicuous at the same time in our annals, each bearing the name of Caractacus, one the son, the other the step-son, of Cartismandua; a circumstance which has created no small confusion among historians: that they are quite different persons, may be plainly established on examining the particulars of their times with attention.

The precise date of the marriage of Cartismandua to Cadallan is not given, but it was shortly followed by other alliances among their families not less important; the Brigantine princess Boadicea being given in mar-

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus.

<sup>2</sup> D'Anville. Hutchinson's Durham.

<sup>3</sup> Scott, Anderson, and Nesbitt.

riage to Arviragus, son of Cartismandua, while his sister became the wife of Caractacus, son of Europeia, who, perhaps to distinguish him from his contemporary and namesake, the King of the Britons, was designated Urickfras, or the Strong-armed. These ties no doubt were intended still further to strengthen the states of Britain, and on the part of the Brigantines, to fortify themselves against Rome in case of necessity; but unfortunately events did not occur in the course which had been anticipated.

One of the first important changes was the death of Metallanus, King of Scots, who leaving no children, the throne devolved upon Caractacus, his nephew; for the laws relative to succession among the Picts were different from those of the Celtic and Teutonic nations, the sons inheriting by right of their mother:<sup>1</sup> thus Caractacus obtained the crown as the son of Europeia; by his elevation the daughter of Cartismandua became the Queen of the Scots,—a brilliant event in the life of her aspiring mother. But it must be named that Cadallan did not himself live to witness his son's accession to power; he died at an early period after his union with Cartismandua, leaving his consort with entire control over the kingdom of Brigantia, now hers in her own right,<sup>2</sup> which, joined to that of the Icenii, gave her as much influence throughout the island as could possibly be enjoyed by either her children or step-children.<sup>3</sup> Well might the heart of the Roman Queen of the Britons be lifted up, in beholding her noble and fortunate offspring blessed with peace, prosperity and power, and herself the friend and ally of a nation so mighty as that of Rome; as an instance of the esteem in which she was held, it is recorded that a large sum of money had been lent to her husband Cadallan by that people,—a circumstance which, though gratifying in the beginning, in the end proved disadvantageous to her interests.

Some account should here be given of a people so singular as the new subjects of Cartismandua,—the Brigantes, who are said to have been the same tribe as the Meatae, who eventually settled north of the Wall of Adrian.<sup>4</sup>

The Caledonians and Meatae, in war and peace, closely resembled each other. Their arms of warfare consisted of a short spear, a broadsword, a dirk, and javelin, with a small target for self-defence. They had neither towns nor villages, houses nor towers; living only in huts, they, like the Britons of the south, had for their subsistence, chiefly milk, the flesh of cattle, and the game killed by their own hands. They were swift and sure-footed, could patiently endure toil, and every hardship. They had horses which were small in size and fleet, and were accustomed to use chariots in warfare, in which they rushed to the thickest of the battle. It is related that in long marches they used a preparation, a quantity of which, no bigger than a bean, sufficed to prevent all sense of hunger and thirst. They were in the habit, like the Britons, of painting and tattooing their bodies, whence they are thought to have obtained the name of *Picts*. In war they cast aside the wolf-skins, which they were accus-

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>2</sup> Dr Henry.

<sup>3</sup> Carte, &c.

<sup>4</sup> Ridpath's Border History.

tomed to wear over their left shoulder, girt with leathern thongs,<sup>1</sup> and appeared on the field of battle almost naked, like the Roman gladiators, wearing round their neck, collars or torques, formed of twisted iron wire, which they regarded as great ornaments, and prized as highly as the other British tribes did theirs of silver and gold;<sup>2</sup> their greatest pride was to exhibit their skins punctured as they were, and painted with the figures of divers animals, flowers, and the heavenly bodies.

There is every reason to believe that the pictures represented on the body of each individual were an index to his history, and like the hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians, handed down records from generation to generation.<sup>3</sup> Such an art, rude as it was, displays no small ingenuity; this opinion is corroborated by the fact, that these figures were afterwards transferred to the shield or banner of the person to whom they belonged. The "marks of the Britons," as they were called,<sup>4</sup> may be regarded as a personal species of heraldry, often recognisable in their names, as in that of "Pen-dragon," the appellation of the family of King Arthur of renowned memory,—the head of a dragon being his device.

It is remarkable that nearly all the ancient British names were expressive of colour;<sup>5</sup> and Camden, who makes this observation, adds that "the most common names of the Britons at present, Gwyn, Dû, Goch, Llwyd, were derived from white, black, red and russet; so that it seems not at all extraordinary that the whole nation should have taken their name from the several tints used in the general practice of painting themselves: and the inhabitants also, both ancient and modern, take their name from colours." The plants called madder were not only in constant requisition for home use, but, next to tin and wool, constituted a great article of commerce with the continent; it was thought by Pliny to have been the same as the plantain of Gaul. Not only married women, but young maidens, are said to have anointed and dyed their bodies with the juice of this plant; some indeed stained themselves all over with its deepest dye, till they became, in colour, like Ethiopians,—a fashion much esteemed. In this guise they attended solemn fasts and festivals, without any other attire,<sup>6</sup> though this seems to have been only the practice for certain offices of religion.

Such was the people amongst whom Cartismandua, refined by birth,

<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson's Durham.

<sup>2</sup> Smith and Meyrick. Howel's Med. Hist. Angl.; and Herodian.

<sup>3</sup> O'Flaherty says the figures were printed with ink, by iron marks.

<sup>4</sup> By Tertullian, "Britannorum stigmata."

<sup>5</sup> The following list is given on the authority of Camden:—

Cogidumnus and Argentocoxus contain *coch* or *goch*, red.

Mandubratius, Cartismandua, Togodumnus, and Bonduca contain *dû*, black.

Venusius and Immanentius contain *gwyn* or *uen*, white.

Cuniglas contains *glas*, blue.

Cingetorix and Arviragus contain *aure*, or gold colour.

Some of the above names were derived from the Romans, as the word *verith*, green, from *viridis*, by which the identity of the names Arviragus and Prasutagus is proved, *verith* and *prasinus* both signifying green.

<sup>6</sup> Pliny, Speed.



education, and association, found herself in command. A change at this time seems to have taken place in her character, and brings it out in a stronger and less pleasing light than it has hitherto appeared.

From the period of the banishment of Adminius, Rome had become a rendezvous for all disaffected Britons. Bericus, a rebel, who had fled thither, having been received and protected by the Emperor Claudius, who refused to deliver him up on application from Togodumnus, King of the Britains, that prince was so offended,<sup>1</sup> that when the next application was made by the Romans for the tribute-money, they met with an indignant refusal, and were, moreover, so fiercely attacked by the passionate Guiderius that they scarcely escaped with their lives: in their haste, they fled to the shelter of those fortresses they had prudently established to guard against a sudden surprise.<sup>2</sup>

The Britons followed up this attack by prohibiting all commerce with Rome.<sup>3</sup> The news of this decree annoyed the Romans greatly, as much of the British produce had become necessary to them; particularly the metals,<sup>4</sup> which they prized highly. Pliny says that the best mirrors were anciently made with a mixture of copper and tin; and that in his time those of silver were so common, that they "were used even by the servant-maids." These metallic mirrors were very much in request amongst ancient nations. The Egyptian women, whenever they went to their temples, carried one in their left hand.

Pliny observes that such was the luxury of the Romans, that it was simply reckoned a piece of elegance to consume, in the ornaments of coaches and the trappings of horses, metals which their ancestors could not use even in drinking vessels, without being astonished at their own prodigality. Nero and his wife shod their favorite horses with gold and silver.

We learn also from Pliny, that the lead mines of Britain were very productive during the first century, especially that at Comeristwith, in Wales; so much so, that the Britons had limited the amount of the yearly quantity to be wrought and transported over the sea. Pliny relates a marvellous story of one of the miners and a favourite crow, which was so tame, that it daily flew and followed him wherever he went. "This man, being one day at work in a valley where the first mine was known to be, laid his purse and girdle beside him, and set to work earnestly, according to his usual custom. The crow kept flitting about him, till it molested him so much that he got angry and menaced the bird. The crow, on this, seized the girdle and purse in its beak and flew away. The man, in despair, at the thought of losing his money, threw aside his tools, and set off in pursuit. By this he saved his life, for he was scarcely out of the mine when it fell in and killed all his fellow-workmen."

British wicker-work,<sup>5</sup> also, was a commodity highly prized at Rome,

<sup>1</sup> Milton, Rapin, Speed.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Lead, in the form of *ceruse*, was in great request among the Roman ladies as a cosmetic. Plautus introduces a waiting-woman refusing to give her mistress either ceruse or rouge, because, in the true spirit of a flattering Abigail, "she thought her quite handsome enough without them."—*Bp. Watson*.

<sup>5</sup> Holinshed.

and much inconvenience was experienced by the Romans from the loss of all this produce, when Togodumnus thus checked the commerce between the two countries. Not the least was the deficiency in payment of the tribute-money, so regularly transmitted by Cymbeline during the whole of his long reign; for though the Romans held Britain in contempt, her money was acceptable.<sup>1</sup>

Claudius despatched an army to reduce Britain to obedience. Aulus Plautius, a man of consular dignity and great wisdom and valour, was, with Cneius Sentius, appointed to the command; he was accompanied by Vespasian, afterwards Emperor, and various other noted persons, among whom was the young Titus, who in this war greatly distinguished himself, and on one occasion was so fortunate as to save his father's life.<sup>2</sup> Four legions, with auxiliaries and cavalry, in all constituting a force of 50,000, embarked for Britain, when an amusing incident occurred,—the soldiers beseeching Plautius, with great earnestness, “not to lead them against a people inhabiting a region beyond the limits of the world:” so barbarous were the Britons considered by these civilized Roman soldiers, that Plautius had the utmost difficulty in getting them on board the vessels.

On their arrival, the Romans were guided by Bericus to the parts of Britain inhabited by his friends; but so bravely were they opposed by the natives, that although in the contest Caractacus<sup>3</sup> and Togodumnus were slain, Plautius was compelled to write off to Claudius to come to his assistance.<sup>4</sup> The aged Emperor, immediately on his arrival, advanced into the country of the Trinobantes, and took possession of Camalodunum.<sup>5</sup> After this he laid siege to the city of Winchester, where Arviragus, who, by his brother Guiderius's death in this contest, had become King, had stationed himself. The Romans first besieged Venta; but afterwards, it was proposed to Arviragus that he should divorce his Queen, Boadicea, and espouse Gwenissa, the daughter of Claudius, at the same time acknowledging the Roman supremacy. These terms being acceded to, peace was agreed on between the Roman Emperor and his barbarian son-in-law.

During the stay of Claudius in Britain, he is said to have endeavoured to reduce the Brigantes also under the Roman yoke. It is worthy of

<sup>1</sup> Hegesippus says, of Britain, “When we would deprive men not only of the privileges of Rome, but, in a manner, of the conversation of mankind, we send them thither, and banish them out of the world.”

<sup>2</sup> Suetonius, Milton, Dr. Henry.

<sup>3</sup> This Caractacus, or Caradoc, was son of Cymbeline and Cartismandua. The victory of Plautius, the Roman general, was honoured with an ovation, and when he went to Rome, the Emperor in person came forth to meet him, giving him the right hand all the way.

<sup>4</sup> Speed.

<sup>5</sup> Claudius, aware of the terror created among the Britons by the appearance of an elephant, well fenced with iron, having on its back a tower full of men, such as Cæsar had brought over with his army, caused some to be brought to Britain on the present expedition. On the former occasion the sight of that monstrous walking battery, moving into the Thames, had effectually frightened the Britons from the opposite shores.—*Lewis, Rapin.*



notice that Seneca, who is said to have lent money to the husband of Cartismandua, writes thus of Claudius; and Camden,<sup>1</sup> who gives the passage, considers it a clear proof that their submission was not enforced, but voluntary; —

“’Twas he whose all-commanding yoke  
The furthest Britons gladly took;  
Him the Brigantes in blue arms adored,  
When the vast ocean feared his power,  
Restrained with laws unknown before,  
And trembling Neptune served a Roman lord.”

It was natural that Cartismandua should receive the Romans amicably, though the acquiescence of her subjects in an alliance with their hitherto hated foes, must have been rather the result of necessity than free will, as subsequent events proved. Whether Cartismandua was personally introduced to the Emperor, is not positively stated; but assuredly a princess known in infancy to the mighty Cæsar, and educated at his court, would readily confirm with Claudius the friendship Cymbeline had during his life preserved unbroken. It is true that two of her sons had thrown off that alliance, and called forth the angry indignation of the “masters of the world,” but they had paid with their lives the penalty of opposition. Policy clearly directed Cartismandua to avail herself of the Roman protection, and she appears to have seen cause to remain their ally and friend to the last.

After the return of Claudius to Rome, the war broke out afresh, through the resentment of Caractacus at the injuries done his sister, Boadicea, whose cause he warmly espoused; and we afterwards find Arviragus, after he had become sufficiently powerful, abandoning his allegiance to Rome, forsaking the daughter of Claudius, and reconciling himself to Boadicea. Vespasian, at the head of the Romans, defeated the allied forces of the Britons, and fearing Cartismandua would espouse the cause of her children, he, after taking the city of Camelon, hastily marched into Galloway or Brigantia, and took possession of the city of Carrick. It was at that place, the capital of the territories of Cartismandua, that Vespasian received the oaths of allegiance of the Brigantes, who despaired of recovering their freedom.<sup>1</sup> Cartismandua being herself desirous to maintain peace, and, moreover, indebted to them a large sum of money, was placed in a difficult position. Her son, whose character proves him to have inherited her own ambition, had been forced into submission, Vespasian requiring him to come in his own person, casting aside his royal attire, and appearing in the humblest apparel, a suppliant for pardon and protection: this the proud Queen was obliged to acquiesce in, however galling she might find it.

Not long afterwards Vespasian was recalled by Claudius to Rome, and we do not hear any more of Arviragus from this date, except as the ally and friend of the Romans, whose protection was thus secured to both Cartismandua and himself.

Aulus Plautius being left at the head of the Roman affairs in Britain, at a time when a dangerous illness prevented his attending to the neces-

<sup>1</sup> Mag. Brit.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

sary duties of the war, the Romans were in danger of losing as much as they had gained, when Ostorius Scapula, a man of noble descent, and great experience both in peace and war, was appointed Pro-Prætor in the place of Aulus Plautius. He had no sooner arrived than that general expired at Camelon, where he was residing at the time :<sup>1</sup> he had survived the departure of Vespasian only two years, during which time the warfare had been carried on in Kyle and Galloway against the brave Caractacus.

After the arrival of Ostorius, the Britons made a fierce irruption into the territories in alliance with Rome, but were repulsed with great slaughter. Among the friends of the Roman Empire, the Iceni till then might be numbered, who had "by their own request" kept up an amicable footing: these were the subjects of Cymbeline and Cartismandua, and had consequently been uninjured by the war. When Ostorius, to protect himself from his disaffected neighbours, attempted to build a chain of forts between the Nen and the Severn, the Iceni themselves flew to arms. They were, however, defeated, and Marcus Ostorius, son of the Roman general, for saving the life of a fellow-citizen in the engagement, was presented with the civic crown. Those of the Brigantines who had rebelled were also obliged to make terms of peace, and the Silures alone maintained the contest under the brave Caractacus, son-in-law of Queen Cartismandua.<sup>2</sup>

About this time the Queen of the Brigantes had married Venusius, a British chieftain, one of the most skilful generals of his time. This prince, called by some writers Prince of the Jugantes, possessed many noble qualities; but whatever motives led to this marriage of Queen Cartismandua, it is generally allowed to have proved most unfortunate to the parties themselves, to their country, and to their allies, the Romans. Both British and Roman authors concur in the praise of Venusius, whose coins have been preserved, and may be seen represented in some of their histories. New accessions to the dignity and possessions of the already powerful Cartismandua must have accrued from this match, and at first no symptoms appeared of the evils about to ensue. Yet a period of calamity for Britain, and bloodshed for Rome, was preparing. While all seemed to submit to the Roman supremacy, one high and haughty soul had scorned to tamper with the freedom of his country. Caractacus had already struggled boldly for his sister's sake; he now reappeared in arms against Rome, and battle followed battle during the space of nine

<sup>1</sup> Plautius was interred in the church of Claudius and Victoria, which Vespasian had built on the banks of the river, near the city; the body of the Roman pro-prætor had been previously burnt, and the ashes inclosed in an urn after the Roman fashion. The Picts and Scots afterwards adopted this mode of burial. [Holinshed.] "The British *cairn* was a heap of stones thrown over the urns in which they deposited the ashes of the dead. These were placed in a stone chest within, termed by the Welsh and Irish by a word denoting a *bed*, and by the British word signifying *sleeping-place*. There were no inscriptions, but a few trip-lets committed to memory handed down, by oral tradition, the names and deeds of the departed." [Smith and Meyrick.] Bania, an Irish queen, was interred in the hill called, from the circumstance, Knockbane. [O'Flaherty.]

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus.

years, Britain becoming the scene of a succession of contests, which ended only in the defeat of that heroic and vainly persevering chieftain.

In the last fatal encounter which took place at *Caer Caradoc*,<sup>1</sup> in Shropshire, A. D. 51, the Britons were completely defeated, the wife and daughter of *Caractacus* were taken prisoners, one of his brothers was forced to surrender at discretion,<sup>2</sup> and the unfortunate prince himself, who was so severely wounded that he with the greatest difficulty escaped from the field of battle, was compelled to seek an asylum with his mother-in-law, *Queen Cartismandua*, who was at the time residing at *Dunstaffnage*, one of the royal cities of the *Brigantes*: the heroic chief, judging by his own heart, trusted that his mother-in-law, though an ally of Rome, would respect his misfortunes, and protect his person in this hour of extreme exigency.

A dark cloud now overshadows the character of *Cartismandua*, who, instead of extending the protection which *Caractacus* had hoped to find, at once abandoned every feeling of affection and compassion, and mindful only of her own interest, delivered up her unfortunate son-in-law to the Roman general.

If anything could be advanced in extenuation of such an act, it might be the fact that the daughter of *Cartismandua* was in the power of the Romans, with several other members of the family of *Caractacus*; perhaps fear for her daughter's fate, should she neglect to deliver up the enemy of Rome, might have had some influence on her conduct, together with alarm for her own safety and that of her kingdom. Before she decided to betray the unfortunate *Caractacus*, *Cartismandua*, it appears, consulted her husband, and her doing so seems to show that she still hesitated. Self-interest, however, prevailed; and she reflected that to protect and shelter *Caractacus* would be to violate her own faith with the Romans; and she reasoned, that to give him up, would, perhaps, be the ultimate means of saving his life, as well as that of her daughter, while both, as relatives of hers, might be respected by the conqueror. Amid these conflicting arguments, *Venusius*, anxious to conciliate his wife and preserve the kingdom, is said to have assented to yield up the unfortunate prince.<sup>3</sup> Without loss of time, therefore, a secret messenger conveyed to *Ostorius Scapula* the tidings of the important prisoner awaiting his disposal.<sup>4</sup>

Some authors have endeavoured to increase the odium which this act has fixed on the memory of the Queen, by attributing it to the envy she felt towards the *Picts*, whom she desired to behold in the same state of thralldom as her own countrymen, the Britons. Others have ascribed the act to the vanity of her ambition to shine as a powerful ally of Rome, and a hope of aggrandisement, to which she sacrificed all the better feelings

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, Warrington, Holinshed, Speed, Lewis, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Until very recently it was customary for a society of gentlemen to meet annually on the hill *Caer Caradoc*, so famed for being the scene of the defeat of the hero whose name it bears, whose praise they celebrate on the occasion in prose or verse. On one of those occasions an admirable extempore poem was delivered by the Rev. Mr. Sneyd Davies. [Pennant, Llyud.]

<sup>3</sup> Speed, Holinshed, Warrington, Dr. Henry.

<sup>4</sup> Scott, &c.

of her nature; be this as it may, certain it is that the Romans overwhelmed her with favours in consequence. Cartismandua is accused of having thrown Caractacus, chained, into prison; but it is to be hoped that those writers are correct who state, that the first fetters which bound the person and wrung the soul of the heroic victim were those with which he was bound by the Romans, a strong party of whom were instantly dispatched, who, coming secretly and suddenly on Caractacus, seized the wounded hero, and conveyed him to the presence of Ostorius. Unconquered even then, the chief addressed these words to the Roman general: "I have been beaten, and lost my liberty, rather through my perfidious step-mother's deceit than the strength of thy arms; it is my duty to submit to the conqueror; but remember thine is, to follow the laws of clemency." Ostorius asking him in what manner he should use him, "In the same," answered Caractacus, "as thou wouldst wish to be used, if thou wert my prisoner."<sup>1</sup>

The joy of the Romans at this unexpected piece of good fortune was unbounded; the unfortunate King was sent, with his whole family, to Rome, to grace their triumph; and ornaments of honour were decreed to Ostorius, who still remained in Britain.<sup>2</sup>

Let us consider next the consequences of giving up Caractacus, to Cartismandua herself.

In the first place, the infamous deed drew upon the Queen and her husband the hatred of the whole British people;<sup>3</sup> but they were obliged to suppress their feelings, for Venusius and Cartismandua were under the all-powerful protection of the Roman Empire; their indignation did not, however, less fiercely burn to avenge the injuries of Caractacus. Loaded with benefits, the treacherous sovereigns for a time had cause for apparent rejoicing in the success of their perfidy, if wealth and power were the aim of the step they had taken. Cartismandua beheld herself raised to a pinnacle of greatness unknown in Britain before her times; her pride is thought to have risen with her fortunes, and she became dazzled by the sunshine of such great prosperity. Luxury seemed now her sole aim, and its necessary corruption followed.<sup>4</sup>

The just jealousy of Venusius had been awakened by the levity Cartismandua displayed in her conduct towards one of her own or her husband's train, a shield-bearer, called Vellocatus.<sup>5</sup> Cartismandua is said to have taken advantage of her husband's displeasure to execute an intention which she had long fostered, to abandon him altogether; an open separation was at once effected, and the Queen, careless of opinion, set no bounds to her will, and in defiance of all decency, espoused the armour-bearer in public, either according to Roman or British custom, after which she caused her new spouse to be proclaimed king.<sup>6</sup> The reasons that

<sup>1</sup> Pineda's History of the Brigantes.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Henry.

<sup>3</sup> Camden says, that the yielding Caractacus up to the Romans, obtained wealth from them for the Queen, as though she had *sold him over to his enemies*; that this wealth procured luxury, which led to all the evils which followed.

<sup>4</sup> Milton.

<sup>5</sup> Lappenberg.

<sup>6</sup> Henry, Malcolm, Lewis, Holinshed, Tacitus, Milton, Stowe.



induced Cartismandua thus to degrade her dignity are unknown, nor is it conjectured how Venusius, whose noble qualities, except in one instance, were generally admitted, could so suddenly have become hateful to her; the Queen's heart seems to have been changed, and the elevation of fortune to which she had of late attained by unworthy means, altogether destroyed her former principle.

The last act of Cartismandua, the elevating Velloctatus to the supreme dignity, proved the ruin of herself and family; it exasperated the people to such a degree, that the whole kingdom was in commotion. Venusius was by all parties esteemed the lawful husband of Cartismandua, and so general was the abhorrence felt at the conduct of the Queen, that they scorned to be ruled by her, and resolved to support her injured husband's right to the throne.<sup>1</sup> The neighbouring states supported this determination, being, as well as the Brigantes, jealous of the ambition and authority of Cartismandua.<sup>2</sup>

The flower of the British youth, having assembled under the conduct of Venusius, attacked the Queen in the heart of her own territories, of which the chief city had declared for Venusius.<sup>3</sup> This unexpected defection in her own subjects was fatal to the Queen's cause. After many sharp encounters she was reduced to such extremities, as to be on the point of falling into the hands of the brave warriors whom she had so much injured. To escape was impossible; no alternative remained, but to apply for help to the Romans, and to them Cartismandua knew her appeal would not be in vain; in fact, the experience of her Roman allies had already caused them to foresee the danger into which the Queen had now fallen. At Cartismandua's request, some bands of horse and foot soldiers were sent to her aid. Several encounters took place between the Roman forces and those of the Queen's enemies; but the former at last prevailed, and were enabled to deliver the Queen from her perilous situation: her person was saved, but she was forced to yield up the possession of her kingdom to Venusius.

The war which domestic dissensions had begun, now involved the foreign foe: up to this time Venusius, who had lived in amity with his Queen, had respected and been respected by the Romans, her friends and allies;<sup>4</sup> now that they openly protected her against his interest, his resentment was unbounded, and he, from this period, vowed vengeance on Rome; and though he had only taken up arms to avenge his own wrongs, he henceforth resolved to engage in a war of hatred against the powerful Roman Empire.<sup>5</sup> The struggle, henceforward, was not for liberty, but for vengeance; and Venusius gave his skilful enemies unexpected trouble.<sup>6</sup> During the three years which ensued, we have no more mention of Cartismandua, who probably had sought shelter and protection at Camalodunum, with her great allies. Her security was, however, shortly endangered; for the camp which Ostorius had established amidst the Silures (the general still persevering in his design of erecting the chain of forts between the Nen and the Severn) was attacked by the Bri-

<sup>1</sup> Malcolm, Lewis, Speed.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Holinshed*.

<sup>3</sup> Camden.

<sup>4</sup> Tacitus.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> Milton



tons in a body, who surrounded the officer commanding the legionary cohorts, and, but for sudden succour from the neighbouring garrisons, would have cut to pieces the whole corps. As it was, the præfect of the camp, with eight centurions and the bravest of the soldiers, were killed on the spot.<sup>1</sup> These and other reverses exasperated and harassed Ostorius, while the Briton's fiercest wrath was aroused by hearing that he had declared he would extirpate the very name of the Silures. A foraging-party of Romans, and the detachment sent to their support, were soon after put to the rout, and two whole auxiliary cohorts, sent in quest of plunder, became prisoners of war to the fierce Britons. Overcome by the continued anxiety of this varying war, Ostorius sunk with fatigue, A. D. 55, when Aulus Didius was appointed to the command of the Roman forces in the island.<sup>2</sup>

During the interval which preceded the arrival of Didius, Manlius Valens, and the legion he commanded, had hazarded a battle, in which they were defeated by the Silures.<sup>3</sup> The first step taken by the new general was to invade the territories of Corbred, King of Scots, who had succeeded to the crown on the imprisonment of his brother Caractacus, and till this time had preserved amity with Rome. This step was taken at the express request of Queen Cartismandua.

The territory of the Picts, on the borders of Scotland, had been assigned to Caractacus for his life, and when that chieftain died, the Romans laid claim to it as reverting to them. This was represented to the Scottish King, who, at the head of an army, had advanced to the scene of warfare, by a herald from Aulus Didius, who ordered the inhabitants of Galloway to depart from that district, and make way for the Romans. The herald of haughty Rome would have been put to death, but was spared out of regard to the laws of arms. Scarcely was the message received, when Corbred learnt that Cæsius Nasica had entered Galloway with a Roman legion, to the great terror of the inhabitants,<sup>4</sup> who, in the engagement which ensued, were defeated by their skilful enemies.

Corbred, who had distributed his men in several castles and fortresses for better security, advanced to Epiake, to obtain advice and assistance from Venusius. He took possession of that city, and left the Brigantes to defend it against their mutual foes.

At this juncture, Queen Cartismandua contrived, by some stratagem, to seize the persons of Venusius, his brother, and several of his family, whom she threw into prison at Epiake; by which one would infer that a party in her favour had still existed among her own people. It is said that the Queen was induced to hazard this daring step, to prevent her husband and his family assisting the Scotch King, as had been stipulated by the late alliance made with Corbred. It would seem that Venusius

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus.

<sup>2</sup> "Didius was a tame, inactive officer, whose great age prevented his performing anything remarkable in the war: indeed, he never risked his own person in any single engagement, but acted by the medium of his officers, content to keep the enemy in subjection, without seeking to add further honours to those he had before accumulated."—*Tacitus*.

<sup>3</sup> Tacitus.

<sup>4</sup> Scott, Holinshed, &c.

himself must have afterwards escaped, as he appears, soon after, opposing Cartismandua in a sharp engagement, in which the Queen, aided by her Roman allies, came off victorious. On this last event, the brave warrior certainly fell into the hands of his relentless wife. Historians relate, that when Corbred heard the tidings of what had befallen Venusius and his family, he hastily retreated towards Epiake.<sup>1</sup> Finding, however, upon his return there, that the cause of Cartismandua was nearly desperate, and that she had resolved to put her prisoners to death,<sup>2</sup> his arrival became the signal of triumph over the fated Queen, who was now in his power; and her enemies were released. The punishment inflicted by the Scottish King on Cartismandua, which immediately followed, marks how deeply he had felt injured by the wrongs of his brother Caractacus, who, like himself, was her step-son, both being children of Cadallan, her former husband.

It appears that Cartismandua was immured alive; her advanced age unconsidered and unpitied. This horrible though deserved death is an indication of the spirit of the times, in which such savage vengeance was considered virtue. From her birth to her grave, Cartismandua's life had been one of vicissitude and irritation. The exile of her father, and loss of his dominions, her marriage and return to Britain, which she looked upon as in itself an exile; the fatal disobedience of her son Adminius, the disaffection of Guiderius and Arviragus from the Roman interest, in which her own was bound up, and the union of her daughter with the declared enemy of Rome; all these events must have filled the heart of the Queen with constant agitations, while the necessary struggles to maintain her power kept her in ceaseless action and alarm; till at length, the unprecedented step she was led into by her ungoverned will, cancelled all her former triumphs, and covered her with disgrace and ruin.

After his signal act of vengeance, Corbred advanced against Cæsius Nasica, whose forces he routed; and from that time forward, an unremitting and successful war was carried on against the Romans, the Brigantes remaining unsubdued during the whole reign of Vespasian.

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<sup>1</sup> Scott, Guthrie, Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Camden.

## BOADICEA "THE WARLIKE."

"War! war! no peace! peace is to me a war!"

The Pictish Princes—Cadallan—Metallanus—Boadicea's claims on British sympathy—British mothers—The Castle of Maidens—Education—Marriage and wrongs of Boadicea—Caractacus rouses himself—Arviragus throws off the Roman yoke—Defeat of the Britons—Roman triumph—Will of Prasutagus—Manner in which it was respected—Seneca as usurer—Outrages of the Romans—Rage and grief of the Britons—Boadicea's resolve—Corbred moved to help her—Insolent answer of the Romans—Taking of Mona—Boadicea's magnificent speech and prayer to Adraste—The hare—Preparations for the fight—Camalodunum—Omens—Fate of the city—Successes—Cruelties—St. Albans taken—The Wheel of Fortune turns—Reaction—Defeat of the Britons—Death of the Queen.

THE disastrous fortunes of Boadicea have furnished a theme for many an historian and poet: and a more dramatic subject could scarcely be discovered throughout the whole of our British annals: as a wife, a queen, a patriot, and a mother, Boadicea was for her heroism in misfortunes unequalled. Spenser, commenting upon the surname of "Victorious," bestowed upon this ill-fated Queen by the Britons, says she was one—

"Who, whiles good-fortune favoured her might,  
Triumphed oft against her enemies;  
And yet, though overcome in haplesse fight,  
She triumphed o'er death in ennemis despite."

*Faerie Queene.*

Little indeed in accordance with the actual history of Boadicea was that triumphant title: her misfortunes might rather, like Priam's, have given her a right to the sad distinction he claimed—

"The first of men in sovereign misery."

Who has not felt sympathy for

"——The British warrior-queen,  
Bleeding from the Roman rods;"

and with tears of commiseration followed her, when she

"Sought, with an indignant mien,  
Counsel of her country's gods!"

The word "Boadicea" is variously written—Bonduca, or Voadicea, or Woda, the letters b and v being used indiscriminately, as in Spanish, by British writers; according to one commentator, "the woman of the sword" is the real meaning of the term: others say that the really British name was *Aregwedd Buddig*, or "the Victorious," "*Buddig*"<sup>1</sup> being "*Boo Tika*" upon the coins of the Queen.

<sup>1</sup> "Beadaihe." The word "*Buddig*" is preserved in an ancient poem, in conjunction with those of *Beli the Great* and *Mynogan*, his predecessor.—*Rev. P. Roberts.*

The mother of Boadicea, Europeia, was a daughter of King Evenus II., and a descendant of Agasia, princess of Britain.<sup>1</sup> Through her, Boadicea might, as King Henry VII. long afterwards did, have laid claim to the honours of a royal Trojan ancestry; on the side of her father also, who boasted himself the descendant of Scota, she derived her origin from the Egyptian monarchs.<sup>2</sup> If this exalted birth could confer happiness, how brilliant and glad might have been the destiny of Boadicea!

The family of Boadicea had early become distinguished by its fidelity to the throne. Cadallus, her grandfather, had signalized himself by his protection of the infant children of Durstus and Agasia, during the period they were excluded from the succession on account of their minority; when one of these young princes became king, as Evenus II., Cadallus filled the office of Regent.

The gratitude of Evenus caused him to reward this tried and faithful friend by the gift of the territory of Brigantia, together with other estates; and when, after the death of Cadallus, dissensions arose among his sons as to the division of their patrimonial inheritance, the King himself undertook to adjust their difference. To the eldest son, Cadallan, afterwards the father of Boadicea, he awarded the greater part of the family estates in Brigantia, with supreme authority over the rest; constituting, in fact, a sort of petty sovereignty. Angus was apportioned to the second son, and the remainder of Brigantia to the third: after which, the Scottish King, in person, proceeded to Epiake, where, in the most conspicuous part of the city he caused a statue, in honor of his departed friend, to be erected.<sup>3</sup>

Cadallan, who was married to Europeia, niece of King Ederus, the next prince who sat on the throne, fixed his residence at Carictonium, in the county of Carrick, and there several of his children were born. As the sons of Pictish princesses inherited the crown by right of their mother, it was thought that Cadallan aspired to the supplanting of the young monarch to whom he had been appointed guardian, but he gave a very convincing proof of the uprightness of his intentions in that respect.

The King, for his vices, had been thrown into prison by the people; and one of the persons about the court, under the impression that he might gain favour with Cadallan, secretly entered the dungeon and assassinated him. The Regent, filled with horror and indignation, put the murderer to death for the crime, and instead of availing himself of this event for an act of treason, instantly proclaimed Metallanus, his wife's brother, king. This prince possessed a character totally different from his predecessor, and swayed the sceptre for the space of thirty years in undisturbed peace and harmony.

During the reign of Metallanus, Cadallan, who had lost his wife Europeia, entered into a second alliance; the lady whom he selected was

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, Speed, Guthrie, Anderson, and Nesbitt.

<sup>2</sup> See Rev. P. Roberts on the Early History of the Cymri, or Ancient Britons.

<sup>3</sup> Pineda, Boetius, Polydore Virgil, Holinshed.



Cartismandua,<sup>1</sup> widow of Cymbeline, the deceased King of the Britons, whose eventful life has just been related in this work.

At the period of her second marriage, Cartismandua, as has been shown, had a numerous family by her first husband. The family of Cadallan consisted of three sons and a daughter; of these Caractacus was the eldest, the daughter was Boadicea.

This princess has the highest claims on British sympathy, from the fact of her having been born, nursed, and bred among her countrymen. She had no leaning to the Roman invaders of the soil; Britain alone had her heart; and the freedom of her country, for which women, as well as men, in her time lived and died, was her ambition.

Her mother's country was the *southern* portion of Scotland, now known as the Lowlands; consequently the habits and manners of those people governed her education and character, and the sentiments displayed throughout her after-life, were caught from those associations.

Among the ancient women of Britain it was a thing to cause suspicion of a wife's fidelity, if her child were reared by any other than the mother. The British matron did not consider it fostered with due care, unless nursed at her own bosom; for she would have dreaded a degeneration from the parents, as well as danger to the infant's life.<sup>2</sup> On the birth of a son, it was usual for the mother to place the first food on the point of her husband's sword, and to insert it in the child's mouth; at the same time she offered a devout prayer to the gods of her country, that the babe might at some future period end his life amidst the swords and javelins of his enemies on the field of battle.<sup>3</sup> We are not actually told that a female child was desired to share the same fate; but as in those days women ever attended upon the warlike expeditions of their husbands, there is little doubt but that the spirit with which Boadicea the Warlike was reared, tended to the same purpose.

In the Isle of Skye, a famous fortress existed in those times, in which the use of arms was taught by a woman; it was called Dun Sgathach; but the scene of the education of the princesses of the Pictish nation, was the celebrated Castle of Maydens, situated in the vicinity of Holyrood House, Edinburgh. Camden, after describing that monastery, proceeds to state that over the edifice, "within a park well stocked with deer, hares, and conies, hangs a mountain with two tops, called Arthur's Chair, from Arthur the Briton. On the west side, there mounts up a rock to a mighty height, steep and inaccessible on all sides but that which looks towards the city, upon which stands a castle, so strongly fortified with a great number of towers, that it is looked upon as impregnable. This the Britons called 'Castle Myned Agned,' and the Scots, 'The Maiden's Castle,' and 'The Virgin's Castle,' because the maiden princesses of the blood-royal of the Picts were kept here."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The date of this marriage cannot be very easily determined: it occurred between the years 2 and 29. Cymbeline died A. D. 2, and Metallanus in 29, who is expressly stated to have survived Cadallan; but the date of Cadallan's second marriage and that of his death are undiscovered.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Solinus.

<sup>4</sup> The Castle of Maidens, afterwards called Edinburgh, from Aidan, one of the



"Here were the daughters and grand-daughters of Pictish monarchs kept in strait custody, and appointed to learn to sewe and worke, till they came to years of marriage."<sup>1</sup> The study of warlike achievements was, therefore, not the only occupation of the female sex.

There is much interest in inquiring into the kind of implements made use of in this primitive condition of society. The ancient British needle was made of bone, and resembled that used for the heads of arrows. The Welsh word "*Nedwydd*" literally implies, sharp-pointed wood; the British word "*Gwaell*" signifies a needle, bodkin, skewer, or brooch, and singularly enough is a denomination made use of for several bones; thus "*Gwaell y goes*" is the spindle-bone of the leg, and "*Gwaell yr Yswydd*," the shoulder-blade bone, which perhaps was split for needles or bodkins.<sup>2</sup>

With the rude implements described, the skins of animals which had been killed in the chase<sup>3</sup> were sewn together, either with leathern thongs or vegetable fibres.

Another favorite employment of the early British maiden, was that of weaving baskets, and the structure of these baskets was so much admired by the Romans, that they not only introduced them into Italy, but even adopted the British name for the *bascaud*, terming them *bascaudæ*.<sup>4</sup> The daughters of modern England and Scotland, who are so familiarly acquainted with the many domestic uses of the basket, must not forget that they owe its invention to the native island maidens who preceded them, nineteen centuries ago. Amongst these, no doubt was the royal Boadicea, who was instructed in all such feminine accomplishments as existed in her time. Nor are we left wholly in ignorance of the associates of her infancy, for several Pictish princesses of that date are noticed by our historians. These were Crifanga and Nairia, who were both daughters of Pictish monarchs. The first lady married in A. D. 15, Lugad Ribdcarg, King of Ireland, who had by his second queen, Devor-

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Scottish kings, was built by the same British king who founded the city of York, whence we discover him to have been of the Pictish race. He was named Ebranke; and the town of York, where his remains reposed, was formerly denominated *Caer Ebranke*, or *Eboracum*. From Maiden Castle in Stanbury, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, ran the old military way, called the *Maiden Way*, because it began at Maiden Castle, and which passed through the ancient town of which the vast ruins yet remaining below Kirkby Thore, in Westmoreland, [north-west of Appleby, upon the river Eden,] are called by the people there *Whely Castle*. This old town is about 300 yards in length, and 150 in breadth, and has three entrances on each side, with bulwarks before them; Roman urns and coins are frequently dug up there.—*Ency. Brit.*

About a mile from Dunstable, in Bedfordshire, is the encampment called Maiden Bower, 2,500 feet in circumference, environed by a ditch and a rampart. Near Leighton Buzzard is a similar one; and on the road from Bedford to Eaton Socon a third may be discerned. See Camden.

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Smith and Meyrick: *Costumes of Ancient Britons*. This work refers to the *Archæologia* for some pictures of these bone needles.

<sup>3</sup> Smith.

<sup>4</sup> Hope's *Essays*, &c.

gilla, a son, named Crimthan.<sup>1</sup> This Crimthan subsequently married Nairia, daughter of Laoch, another Pictish king, and assumed from his wife the surname of Niadhnar.<sup>2</sup> It was usual for Pictish princes to assume the name of their wife or mother, from the custom which existed among them of conveying the hereditary rights of their monarchs through the female line. On the death of the king, a new member of the royal family was selected as his successor, who always laid claim to the throne "by the spindle side," and was presented to the people as his *mother's* heir.<sup>3</sup> It seems probable that some connexion existed between one or both these princesses with Boadicea, as at a subsequent period, Crimthan, step-son of the former, and husband to the latter, made himself conspicuous for an expedition into Britain to aid his friends and relatives the Picts and Scots, against their formidable enemies, the Romans. He is said to have returned to Ireland laden with the spoils of the Roman legions, amongst which were "a suit of armour, embossed with gold and gems, a military cloak with golden fringe, a sword with figures of serpents upon it in chased gold, and a brace of greyhounds joined together by a silver chain, of which the price was estimated, according to the primitive custom of barter, at the value of three hundred cows."<sup>4</sup>

Boadicea had very early lost her mother, and was destined to be deprived of her other surviving parent; a particularly trying circumstance for her, as it placed her more completely under the influence of her haughty step-mother Cartismandua. This position must have had a powerful influence on her after-life. Another important event which happened A.D. 29, was the death of her uncle, King Metallanus, who leaving no children, the race of Fergus became extinct, and the crown was adjudged to Caractacus, son of Europeia, the King's sister.<sup>5</sup>

On the elevation of Caractacus to the throne, the ambitious Cartismandua sent to negotiate with that king and his sister, the alliances which united in one firm and double tie the royal family of North and South Britain; it was probably about the same time that the princess Boadicea became united in marriage to Arviragus, the third son of Cartismandua. Through her children, the Queen of the Brigantes might thus control both extremes of the country, and her own individual power was by no means limited as leader of the mighty people which formed a barrier between the two.

The Iceni were the people over whom Arviragus ruled; they are named by Tacitus as being very rich and prosperous, and had been unshaken by the war with the Romans.

The country of the Iceni was divided between the Magni and Coritani, who possessed all the country from the Stour in Essex to the banks of the Humber and the Don. Caistor, near Norwich, was the capital town

<sup>1</sup> The death of Devorgilla, mother of Crimthan, who was a princess of Denmark, and Lugad's second wife, so affected that prince that he put a period to his own existence. O'Flaherty, O'Halloran, Warner, Keating.

<sup>2</sup> O'Flaherty.

<sup>3</sup> Palgrave's Saxon Commonwealth.

<sup>4</sup> Moore's History of Ireland.

<sup>5</sup> Duncan's History of Scotland. Caractacus became king A. D. 28. Holinshed.

of the Iceni Magni, who dwelt between the Stour and the Nen. On the other hand Leicester, called Ragaë, was the capital of the Iceni Coritani, who dwelt between the Nen and the Humber and Don.<sup>1</sup>

Amongst these people were two Roman stations, Camborita or Cambridge, amongst the Magui; and another at Lincta or Lincoln, amongst the Coritani; and so late as A. D. 48, the people preserved their friendship with Rome. Probably this was owing to the rule of Cymbeline, and doubtless his widow and children had endeavoured to maintain the good understanding which existed. The Trinobantes and Cassii being their southern neighbours, and the Brigantes those to the north, assisted in preserving this state of peace, those nations being allies of Rome. The Carbanii adjoined them on the west.<sup>2</sup>

Arviragus and Boadicea, it appears, resided at Norwich, which city was termed by the Romans "*Ventā Icenorum*," the "Winchester" or royal city of the Iceni. A Roman castle, about three miles distant, was supposed to have been built by Cæsar.<sup>3</sup>

For some years after the marriage of Boadicea, we gain no further information respecting her than that she became the mother of two daughters and a son, who were educated in Britain; and with them was brought up a son of one of the brothers of Boadicea, who was surnamed Galgacus or Galdus, from the circumstance of his living among strangers, and who afterwards became a distinguished personage.

The circumstances attending the arrival of the Emperor Claudius in Britain have been already related, and the separation of Arviragus and Boadicea. The object of the Romans was to disunite the British princes, the better to establish their power. They wished to divide Arviragus from the Scottish interest, and with this view the daughter of Claudius had been proposed for his wife. Aulus Plautius is said to have first suggested the measure.<sup>4</sup> Arviragus consulted with his Britons, and their consent gained, peace was made between the British king and Roman emperor. Deputies were sent to Rome for the princess, and the unfortunate Boadicea, on pretence of some "private ground for displeasure," was formally divorced from her husband, and with her children, placed in confinement, where, to add to her grief, one of them died. This unjust proceeding was deeply resented by the Britons, to whom Boadicea was dear; the story of her wrongs roused every heart in the kingdom. It was not the least felt by the heroic king of Scotland, who hastened to rescue his beloved sister from her ignominious and unmerited thralldom.

Boadicea was, probably, confined in the capital of her own dominions, viz., Norwich; otherwise, the scheme which was adopted by Caractacus might not have been so successful. The Britons, placing themselves under arms, are said to have forcibly carried off the Queen and her children from their prison, and conveyed them into Wales to the protection of Caractacus, to whom a great portion of that country belonged, for he is particularly denominated King of the Silures by some historians. This

<sup>1</sup> Hoare's Notes on Giraldus Cambrensis.

<sup>2</sup> Hoare.

<sup>3</sup> Parkins's Norwich.

<sup>4</sup> Holinshed. Grafton's Chronicle.

people inhabited Wales and the Marches, and at this time Shrewsbury was one of their chief towns. That this was the heart of the territories of Caractacus in South Britain, appears from its neighborhood afterwards being the place of his final defeat.<sup>1</sup> Here, then, Boadicea was received by one who was her faithful friend in adversity, and the meeting of such a brother and sister, under circumstances like theirs may easily be conceived. The indignation of Caractacus, once aroused against the Romans, was destined to be felt by them without cessation for a long series of years:<sup>2</sup> at present their measures were entered into and determined upon in relation to the future only, for they waited the result of impending events.

The next summer brought to Britain the Roman princess, who was formally united to Arviragus; and as if no measure should be neglected to gratify the Romans, and insult the discarded Queen, it was determined in counsel that the children of Arviragus, by his first marriage, should be excluded from the succession, and that the regal power should devolve on the offspring of the present marriage.

After the unsuccessful battle fought by the friends of Boadicea, when the Roman chiefs and Arviragus retired to London, Caractacus retreated first to York, and afterwards to Carrick. Thither an embassy from Plautius followed him, demanding the reason of his opposition to the Roman authority. Caractacus's answer was, that he had just cause for his conduct in the injuries that his sister Boadicea, and her son Guiderius, had sustained, and were likely to sustain, through their counsel and means; and so little was he disposed to make any amends for what was done that he thought it more reasonable that the Romans should quit the island of Britain, unless they had made up their minds to have not only the Britons, but the Picts and Scots, for their perpetual enemies, if only for the defence of their ancient liberty and freedom. The Roman ambassadors having returned with this answer, Plautius was highly indignant, and threatened revenge on the author of such high and contumelious language against the majesty of the Roman empire.<sup>3</sup>

Things being arranged to the satisfaction of the Roman Emperor, Claudius returned to Rome, leaving Arviragus in possession of the sovereignty—if such it could be called under the present circumstances, his Queen being a Roman, and her allies, Aulus Plautius and his forces, having a sort of military rule under him, in which he was compelled to acquiesce. Arviragus, however, for a time preserved his faith. He even united with the Roman general to chastise the Britons for the abduction of Boadicea, against whom a battle was fought; but the Queen's adherents being overthrown, the affection for her was such that the very next day the people of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Derbyshire flew to arms, and the Roman force, with the two leaders, Arviragus and Plautius, was compelled to retreat to London, lest an escape to the continent should be necessary; and in the emergency, Plautius sent to Rome for two more legions to support his authority.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus.

<sup>3</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>4</sup> Caractacus, King of Scots, was elected chieftain in this war, undertaken in



These events were followed by a general meeting of the friends of Boadicea, at Shrewsbury, in which Caractacus was invested with the sole command of the forces to be raised among the Britons, Scots, and Picts. In the following spring the hosts of these three nations were collected in Yorkshire, to make another struggle in favor of the Scottish princess. After a sanguinary contest, Arviragus and Plautius again retreated on London, and Caractacus and his friends to York, and thence to Epiake. The Roman general sent soon afterwards an embassy to Caractacus, which received the haughty answer suggested by the freedom of spirit in which Caractacus had been brought up.

After this, Arviragus suddenly assumed in his own person the sole command, disdaining the intervention of the Romans. Vespasian, afterwards Emperor, was sent over by Claudius to compel him to submit; that general laid siege to Exeter, where Arviragus, having come up with his forces, gave him battle, though no decided victory was gained on either side: the next day the King was reconciled to Vespasian by the interference of Queen Gwenissa; but afterwards deserting his wife, Arviragus fled to Shrewsbury, where a reconciliation took place between him and his much-injured Queen, Boadicea. The fate of Gwenissa belongs to her biography.

Arviragus once more on the British side, the affairs of Boadicea wore a more favourable aspect. The chiefs of Britain united their forces again in Yorkshire, but before an engagement could take place, Vespasian fell upon the army of confederates, and it was almost cut to pieces in spite of its brave defence. Arviragus himself was prevented only by his attendants from falling on his own sword; they carried him by main force from the field of battle. The Pictish King, who had joined in this struggle, beholding the destruction of his people, desired not to survive them; he threw away his arms and regal ornaments, and sitting down on a stone, as one distracted, was slain by some of the Romans who followed up the pursuit. Caractacus escaped into his own country.<sup>1</sup>

Vespasian next besieged Camelon, and forced it to surrender from famine: to that town had been carried the regal ornaments of the Pictish King, of which the Roman General secured possession.<sup>2</sup> They consisted of a crown, with other jewels; and we are told, that with these was a sword, which had a haft of gold and purple scabbard, very finely wrought and carved, which Vespasian ever after wore with much pride in his wars.<sup>3</sup>

Camelon was now peopled with Romans by Vespasian, and endowed with the liberties and privileges of a Roman city. A temple to Claudius was built on the banks of the Carron, in which two statues were set up

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his sister's defence, [Holinshed,] by the general desire of the people, and promised to join the allied forces at Shrewsbury in the spring. Congist, King of the Picts, also added his friendly assistance at this juncture. [Ibid.]

<sup>1</sup> See Life of Gwenissa.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Holinshed. When Arviragus threw off the Roman yoke, it is likely he fortified those places which were most convenient for their invasion, viz., Richborough, Walmer, Dover, and Hastings.—*Chronicles of Dover Monastery, printed in Leland's Collectanea.*



by order of the general, one of which represented Claudius, and the other the goddess Victoria. Vespasian subsequently marched into Galloway, and took possession of Carrick, where he received the oaths of allegiance of the people, who, till then, had held out in the cause of the Queen and liberty. It was probably to this town that King Arviragus came to meet the victorious Roman, to whom he had, with consent of his adherents, offered to submit upon honourable terms. Vespasian, on this occasion, desirous of humbling the pride of Arviragus, refused to make any terms, unless he would come in his own person, and in private attire, a condition probably more galling to him than any other which could have been imposed. Resistance was, however, useless. He divested himself of his royal costume and equipage, and, coming to Vespasian in the humble manner he had dictated, was not only pardoned, but restored to his former station. Hostages were, however, required for his fidelity, and a fine imposed, not only on every chief who had rebelled, but on every city which had joined in taking up arms against Rome. The British laws were abrogated, Roman ones were substituted, and a Roman judge was appointed over every province, for the preservation of peace and Roman discipline.

Arviragus is no more mentioned in history, except as an ally of the Romans, with whom, during the rest of his long life, he maintained terms, and even assumed the greatest respect for the Roman Senate. The fame of his valour effaced all beside in the Roman mind, now that he was subservient to the will of the strongest; and the poet Juvenal, who, in some complimentary verses addressed to the Emperor, mentions him thus :

“Some captive king, thee, his new lord, shall own;  
Or, from his British chariot headlong thrown,  
The proud Arviragus comes tumbling down.”

It was considered a subject of glory and triumph, even for the Roman Emperor to aspire to conquer or make captive this heroic chieftain.<sup>1</sup> Arviragus is said to have been more fierce in war than any of the princes, his contemporaries; yet, in peace, no one could be more mild or more jocose. He is said to have enacted new laws, and confirmed those of his ancestors, and to have distinguished himself for the princely munificence with which he rewarded persons of merit. His selfishness and cruelty to both his wives is lost in the turbulence then called bravery.

The next point which historians give us of Boadicea's history unites her name with that of Prasutagus, King of the Iceni, her husband, who appears to be the same as Arviragus, King of the Iceni, and which name he seems to have borne after the death of his mother, Queen Cartismandua.<sup>2</sup> One circumstance might account for the new name of the King of the Britons: his second wife, Gwenissa, laid aside her Roman name, and adopted one purely British; and as it was usual among the ancient Britons, when they embraced the faith of Christ, and were baptized, to

<sup>1</sup> In compliment to Vespasian, for his valour displayed in Britain, on his return to Rome he was met by the Emperor without the gates of the city, who gave him the right hand as they walked,—a mark of very great esteem.

<sup>2</sup> Rapin.

adopt new names from the Greek, Latin, or Hebrew, it is not unlikely that the king adopted it when, with Gwenissa, he received the Christian faith. As the British word Gwerydd (for Arviragus) contains the basis of *viridis*, *green*, conveyed in the word Prasutagus, and the custom of Britain was to specify some particular colour in the name of the individual, this alone seems to set the question of identity, which has been raised, beyond further doubt.<sup>1</sup>

Arviragus, or Prasutagus, as we may now call him, anticipating the rapacity of the Romans, left, by his will, the Emperor Nero co-heir with his two daughters, making no mention whatever of Queen Boadicea; for the husband of Gwenissa, who, at her death, had left a son as her heir, could only hope by such a division as that made in the will to secure his family from injury.

No sooner, however, was he deceased, than the officers of Nero seized on his entire effects in their master's name, his kingdom was spoiled by the Roman centurions, his house ransacked by slaves, his kinsmen treated as captives of war, and the wealthiest of his subjects amongst the Iceni despoiled of their estates, under the pretext furnished by the will; this last injustice was done at the instigation of the colony settled at Camalodunum or Colchester, with whom the soldiers co-operated, hoping hereafter to be able to take the same license themselves; thus, many who had settled even in that city, were expelled from it on the same pretence. The temple erected to Claudius, appeared to those Britons who remained in Camalodunum, a badge of their eternal slavery, for the priests employed in it under pretence of religious services due there, wasted or embezzled every man's property for their own private use.<sup>2</sup> This was not enough for the cupidity of the oppressors. Catus Decianus, the Roman procurator, endeavoured to bring all the people's goods under a new confiscation, by disavowing the remittment of Claudius; fresh taxes were imposed on lands and cattle;<sup>3</sup> and to crown all, those Britons who had been drawn in by the rich philosopher Seneca, Nero's counsellor, to borrow vast sums of money under his promises of easy loan, and licence to repay at convenience, were suddenly compelled to repay all at once, with great extortion. Among the number of those who had entered into such a snare as to entangle themselves in debt to Seneca, was the father of Boadicea, who had obtained the money through Roman usurers.<sup>4</sup> "The King of the Iceni," as he is here called, would rather seem to have been Cymbeline or Venusius, than the brave Cadallan, father of Boadicea and Caractacus; and if either of these, the word "father" might be intended to signify "step-father;" it was certainly one of the three; and in any case, on the death of Arviragus, such a debt must necessarily devolve on Boadicea, as the representative of those princes. The unfortunate Queen, a widow, in the hands of merciless creditors and unrelenting enemies,

<sup>1</sup> There is some diversity of opinion as to the place of interment of this celebrated British monarch,—whether, as some relate, he was buried in the temple of Claudius at Gloucester, or at London; nor is the exact date of his death specified.

<sup>2</sup> Stowe, Echard, Milton.

<sup>3</sup> Warrington.

<sup>4</sup> The amount due was forty sesterces.

vainly remonstrated against the injustice of their proceedings; at length, infuriated by her reproaches, and unrestrained by any feeling of humanity, the brutal soldiery to whom she was given up, encouraged by their more brutal leaders, subjected the ill-fated Boadicea to the common punishment of the scourge, while the fate of her unhappy daughters was even more hideous than her own. Their immortal wrongs blacken the page of history, which has no record so atrocious.<sup>1</sup> The tide of accumulated injuries was now at its height, and the fury of a whole nation burst forth in one overwhelming current, to overflow the land with the blood of enemies whom no laws had restrained.

Agès have passed by, yet the heart still bleeds at the record of this noble woman's wrongs. From the moment of this outrage, the heart of the Queen was deadened to all feelings but those of vengeance, stung with shame, crushed with unmerited disgrace, and bowed by agonies that found no name; while Boadicea resolved still to endure life, hateful as it had become to her, in the sole hope of wreaking a fearful vengeance which should atone for her unheard-of injuries.

No lack of sympathy was shown for the wrongs of Boadicea by her generous and loyal-hearted Britons. One and all, the inhabitants of the Roman colony of London excepted, determined to unite in freeing their country from the yoke of a people who could perpetrate such crimes, more hateful since the victims were the weak and defenceless. The injuries long oppressing themselves, had been, up to this time, endured; but this outrage armed them all in one common cause, and they felt that the hour for a final struggle had arrived. At this time the Roman writers themselves acknowledge that the violence and injustice of the Emperor's servants gave the Britons just cause to lay aside their private animosities, and aid their Queen in the recovery of their lost liberty. The daughter of Cadallan placed herself at the head of her devoted partisans, and the disunion which Cæsar had hailed as one of the happy causes of his success, was at once extinguished in the bosoms of the British chiefs; one spirit alone animating the mass—the desire to avenge the injuries of their Queen,—a cause which embraced the personal wrongs of each individual. But before the actual outbreak of the tremendous insurrection which filled all the Roman empire with amazement and consternation, secret councils were held by the chieftains to concert measures for their rebellion. Among these was Venusius, who with his party had warmly espoused the cause of Boadicea; and at these meetings the Queen is said to have personally addressed her faithful ministers on the subject of their mutual wrongs. One of the evils of the Roman yoke on which she insisted, was the introduction of vices unknown in Britain, except through the medium of those jesters and buffoons, whom their tyrants encouraged to corrupt the nation. These persons were employed, it would appear, in the theatres at Camalodunum and Caerleon,<sup>2</sup> which had become colonized by Romans, and where the novelty of such spectacles

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<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, Stowe, Milton, Echard.

<sup>2</sup> The remains of the Roman theatres are yet to be seen in some parts of Britain, as Caerleon, in Monmouthshire, &c.

as theatrical shows or entertainments would create vast astonishment and admiration, and doubtless obtain many followers among the uninformed Britons. Boadicea, in her celebrated address to her noble chiefs, stigmatized these persons as "Rome's instruments and Britain's vipers;" remarking that "Tiberius, though extremely covetous, would have been glad to have made peace, and Nero would still have followed his fiddling trade at home, had not the discords of Britain been fomented and kept alive by his fiddlers here!" From this address we discover that there had been a party among the Britons in favour of Rome; and that this still existed appears from the Londoners withholding their support to the approaching insurrection, for which they were destined afterwards to suffer severely.

The Trinobantes, and neighboring states, are said in the outset to have warmly espoused the cause of the Queen, and joined her with their forces. To these different states Boadicea had from time to time addressed herself, in epistles composed for the inhabitants of such towns and provinces as had united in resolving to throw off the Roman yoke, and which treated not only on that, but on other subjects of national importance; for the Queen, we are informed, was "well versed in letters,"<sup>1</sup> which is not surprising, as the Roman intercourse with this island had been long enough carried on to enable her to become acquainted with Latin forms of literature; and we find that in this early period the Britons were not only possessed of traditions, but had written records of their own affairs,<sup>2</sup>—the characters, indeed, being peculiar to their age, and the knowledge of them limited to the persons of highest rank only, and the Druids. Gildas, the British poet and historian, attributes the scarcity of British records to the artifice of their enemies, the Romans, who were anxious to destroy every memorial of past times with the Druidical religion, by whose ministers they were preserved.<sup>3</sup>

The Queen had, in the first instance, dispatched a messenger to her brother Corbred, King of the Scots, father of Corbred Gald, a young prince whom she had herself nursed and educated at her own court, and who passed many years with Boadicea amid the chequered scenes of her eventful life.<sup>4</sup> She complained in bitter terms of the injuries inflicted on herself and her daughters, by which she, his only sister, had been brought to extreme misery, and assured him that the Britons were ready to arm in her cause. Corbred was deeply moved by these sad tidings. He sent

<sup>1</sup> Bale reckons both Arviragus and Boadicea among the authors of Britain.

<sup>2</sup> Gildas.

<sup>3</sup> Conquovar Mac Nessa, King of Ulster, A. D. 48, ordered the precepts of the Druids of Ireland to be committed to writing.—*Toland*.

"In private the ancient Scots were accustomed to use for writing, ciphers which did not resemble the letters of other nations, but rather the characters used by the Egyptians, being figures of animals made into the form of letters, as appears from the characters on the ancient tombs to this time; and though these ancient hieroglyphics are now lost, they have a kind of writing peculiar to themselves, which was once in common use, and those who have the ancient speech pronounce the aspirations and diphthongs better than any of the rest."—*Holinshed*.

<sup>4</sup> Scott.



a herald to Catus, the Roman general, requiring him to obtain reparation from those Romans who had so basely treated the British Princesses. If this was not done, the King declared he would himself be her avenger. The Roman general's reply was full of contempt and ridicule. He scornfully upbraided Corbred for interfering with the Roman officers' affairs, "who were above taking notice either of his sister or her daughters, and at liberty to treat them as other women, according to their pleasure."

Corbred, indignant at this new insolence, hesitated no longer, but making an alliance with the Picts and people of the Isle of Man, soon raised a strong body for the enterprise, intended to act with the forces raised by the Queen in her own behalf. But before these could form a junction, a sudden and unlooked-for event precipitated the rebellion into an outbreak. This event was the reduction of the Island of Mona<sup>1</sup> by Suetonius Paulinus, then head of the Roman forces in Britain. This celebrated general was sent to Britain in the year 61, by Nero, to take the command of the Roman forces. He was already distinguished for merit and military talent, and to this was joined the strongest impulses of ambition, for he had formed a determination that his successes in Britain should equal those of Corbulo in Armenia. To reduce the whole island was his ultimate aim. His first undertaking was, however, the reduction of the Ordovices, or people of North Wales. These were the inhabitants of the present counties of Denbigh, Carnarvon, Merioneth, and Montgomery.<sup>2</sup>

The Ordovices received that name at the time of their conquering Worcestershire, Warwickshire, and North Gloucestershire; it signified the "Great Huicci," or "the Honourable Wices;" and after their expulsion thence, other British settlers in that part were called Wigantes or Huicci.<sup>2</sup> This seems to be the people who were ranged under the standard of Venusius, who had warmly espoused the cause of Boadicea.

Agricola, at that time only twenty years of age, had accompanied Paulinus in his expedition against the Ordovices, and resided with him at his head-quarters. Under this great commander, the young warrior acquired that experience which, at a subsequent period, enabled him to accomplish the reduction of the island; the cherished hope of Suetonius himself, though he did not live to accomplish his high aim.

The people whom Suetonius had resolved to not only subdue, but extirpate and destroy, were brave, warlike, and devoted to their religion; the enterprise presented, therefore, very great difficulties: it was the more desirable to accomplish, because this spot, the court of ecclesiastical and civil justice, had become a rendezvous for every British malcontent. To enable himself more effectually to reduce this island, Suetonius withdrew the veteran soldiers from Camalodunum, little foreseeing the disastrous consequences which might arise from leaving so important a hold unprotected against their enemies. About this time, Petilius Cerealis<sup>3</sup> received from Nero an appointment in Britain, to occupy the place of Vettius Volanus, who, for his mildness of disposition, was recalled. Petilius was

<sup>1</sup> Anglesey.

<sup>2</sup> Life of Agricola.

<sup>3</sup> Green's History of Worcester.

<sup>4</sup> Tacitus and Hume say that Petilius was first sent over A. D. 70.

very unlike his predecessor; already distinguished as a skilful veteran, in the war against Civilis, the Batavian chief, he was well suited to propagate the terror of the Roman arms in Britain. Suetonius himself was also remarkable for his severity; so that the Britons were oppressed in every way. Such was the state of things when the Roman general penetrated for the first time as far as Mona, the seat of their mysterious worship, and now crowded with inhabitants, many of whom had sought its shelter as a last retreat.<sup>2</sup>

For the purpose of the intended invasion of the island, Suetonius caused ships to be made with flat bottoms, for a steep, uncertain shore. "In these the foot were conveyed over; the cavalry followed, by fording in shallow water, or swimming, and leading the horses. On the shore stood a motley troop of armed men, mixed with women running up and down among them, dressed like Furies, in *black garments*, their hair dishevelled, and torches in their hands. The Druids also attended, lifting up their hands to heaven, and uttering dreadful execrations. The novelty of the sight so struck the soldiers, that they stood as it were motionless, exposing themselves to the enemies' weapons, till, animated by the exhortations of their general, and encouraging one another not to fear an army of women and madmen, they advanced, bore down all they met, and involved them in their own fire. Garrisons were afterwards placed in the towns, and the groves, sacred to their bloody superstitions, cut down; for it was their practice to offer the blood of their prisoners on their altars, and consult the gods by the entrails of men." Such is the relation Tacitus gives of the taking of Mona; and the spot in Anglesey where Suetonius and his barbarous legions butchered the unoffending Druids is still shown at a ferry, called Porthamel, across the Menai Straits. The horrors of such a slaughter baffle description; men and women alike fell victims, and deluged their own altars with their blood. Suetonius expected, now that he had effected his object in reducing Mona, that the whole of Britain would be reduced to the Roman yoke; but he was altogether deceived in his calculation: while yet employed in arranging matters for the security of his new conquest, he received the alarming news that the whole country was in a state of revolt.

The tidings of what had been done by Suetonius Paulinus had become very quickly known through the island, and reached the ears of Boadicea. She saw that the moment was arrived for the decisive stroke. The veteran troops had been called from Camalodunum, to assist Suetonius in the reduction of Mona; and Boadicea perceived that the city might easily be taken by her forces. The Scottish succours from Corbred had not arrived; but the warlike Queen determined not to delay her intended plans for their arrival. Prior to the approaching contest, Boadicea, in conformity with the customs of her times, determined to encourage her followers, by addressing them on the subject of the strife in which they were about to engage. For this purpose she mounted an eminence raised of turf, from which she could be seen by the whole assembled multitude, amounting to as many as 80,000 men. The appearance of the Queen is said to have

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<sup>1</sup> Tacitus.

struck awe into the heart of each beholder, by the dignity and majesty of her demeanour. In person, Boadicea was of the largest size, her face was beautiful, but fierce and stern; some annalists say, "terrible of aspect, savage of countenance." Her complexion was brilliantly fair,<sup>1</sup> and her yellow locks, which were spread all over her shoulders, reached down to her hips. She wore a plaited tunic of several colours, drawn close about her bosom, and over that a vestment made of some stuff of British manufacture, fastened by a clasp, and adopted in compliment to the southern natives; the chequered robe beneath being the produce of the north of Britain. About her neck she wore a thick collar, or chain of gold, esteemed a mark of the highest command, and expressive of the dignified quality of the wearer. She addressed the whole assembly, in a voice loud enough to reach the ears of the most distant of her eager auditors who crowded around her, many of whom were women.

Her speech was as follows:—

"My friends and faithful subjects,—I do believe that there is no man here who is ignorant how much freedom and poverty are preferable to bondage and wealth.

"Since the Romans have been acquainted with this island, there is no indignity, however vile, no cruelty, however grievous, which we have not suffered.

"Are we not contemned and trodden under foot by those who have studied only to become our lords and tyrants? Are we not bereaved of our riches and possessions? Do we not till their land, and pay them all manner of tribute, even for our persons? Amongst other nations, death is a deliverance from slavery; but with the Romans, the dead do still live, even to augment their riches.<sup>2</sup>

"And can we hope for mercy at their hands, who have already treated us so barbarously? Even he who taketh a wild beast, will at first cherish it, and seek by gentleness to win it to familiarity. Are we not, then, the authors of our own misery, in suffering them to set foot in our

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<sup>1</sup> The ancient British maidens were remarkable for a dazzling whiteness of skin, which, accompanied by a ruddy and florid complexion, was thought to be produced by the humidity of the climate. [Xiphiline.] Fedelmia was so noted for her fair complexion as to be surnamed "White as silver." Carbrei Niafear, King of Leinster, in order to obtain the hand of this princess from her father, Conquovar Mac Nessa, King of Ulster, was compelled to cede a large portion of his territories. Three fruitful tracts of land, extending from Loch-au-Choidaigh and Tara to the sea were, by Carbrei's consent, annexed to the dominions of Conquovar, as his daughter's marriage settlement. [O'Flaherty, Keating.] Boadicea, Claudia, and St. Helena, are especially noted for beauty of complexion. [Xiphiline.]

<sup>2</sup> It is supposed that the expression in the speech of Boadicea (given by Dion Cassius) which refers to *taxation* thus—"We are forced to pay for the bodies of our very dead," relates to the impost of the Romans on those Britons buried according to national custom, instead of being burnt like the Romans; and that a high price was demanded for the privilege of burying the higher orders in their best garments, and laying by their side their axe and dagger, as we have often had instances in the openings of cromlechs,—a custom to which the Britons continued obstinately to adhere.

island? We should have slain them afar off, and driven them back even as we did Cæsar.

"Better were it to lose our lives in defence of our country than to drag on a miserable existence in servitude.

"Wherefore, my well-beloved citizens, friends, and relations, let us, while the remembrance of our ancient liberty remains, seek to recover, not only the name of freedom, but the enjoyment of liberty itself. Let us set an example to posterity. Let us not forget what we have once been; for, if so, what can we expect of our children, brought up in misery and bondage?

"I do not recall these things to rouse you to rebellion, for I well know you sufficiently abhor the Roman name, neither do I seek to put you in fear of what might happen hereafter; but I would return my hearty thanks and commendations, that you do thus willingly obey my summons, unawed by your powerful oppressors, and proving yourselves prompt, zealous, and courageous, and willing to live or die for your Queen and country. Do your enemies outnumber us? Regard their strength. We do so much exceed them, that our army is strong as stono walls, and one of our targets is of more value than all the armour they bear. The victory will soon be ours. They must soon be our captives. Yet, should we loose the field, we may easily escape the calamities of a defeat; for their heavy arms will impede their pursuit, and the hills and marshes will intercept them.

"We can endure hunger, thirst, cold and sunshine; they live in tents or houses: baked meats, wine and oil, are necessary to them; if these fail or the summer sun oppress them, they languish and consume: but to us, every herb or root is meat, every juice an oil, water is pleasant wine, and every tree affords a habitation.<sup>1</sup>

"Besides this, the country is well known to us, and we have many friends; but the Romans are strangers, and without succor in case of need. We can swim over every river, naked or clad, while they require mighty ships to convey them.

"Let us then courageously attack them, and let us teach them that hares and foxes can never match with wolves and greyhounds."

At these words Boadicea released from beneath her mantle a hare, which had been purposely concealed;<sup>2</sup> and the sight of this prognostic of success was received with loud shouts by the people, who hailed it with a loud shout, and vented freely their indignant feelings against the ill-treatment of their Queen.

<sup>1</sup> Hares, fowls, geese, and fish, the Britons were by their religion forbidden to eat.

<sup>2</sup> The hare released by Boadicea is generally supposed to betoken the fearfulness of the Romans. The hare was used by the Britons for the purposes of divination: and though they never killed it for the table, from the delight which they took in breeding it, they kept numbers about the courts of their chiefs. The idea of a hare-warren, and the model of a park, were originally derived by us from the primeval Britons. [Whittaker's Manchester.] An instance of one of the warrens yet exists at Kimble, in Bucks, once the abode of King Cymbeline. The speech of the Queen seems to infer that the fox was also held in veneration by the people.



Boadicea now recalled their attention, while she proceeded with her prayers or supplication; wherein she especially addressed herself to the deity of woman worshipped by the British people, under the name of Andate or Andraste, their Goddess of Victory;<sup>1</sup> and this appeal, as well as her former speech, is worthy of a more enlightened age.

"I thank thee, O Adraste," were the words she used, "and call upon thee, not as a ruler such as Messalina, as Agrippina, or as Nero, which last is called a man, but is indeed a woman; but I call upon thee as the goddess of our British warriors, whose wives are no less brave and valiant than themselves. I beseech thee, since I am Queen of this mighty people, to grant them health, liberty, and victory over the wicked, insatiable, and luxurious Romans, whose lives are devoted to covetousness and cruelty. Let not, I beseech thee, the tyranny of Nero and Domitian any longer prevail. That thou wilt be our helper, our defender and our saviour, I heartily beseech thee!"

At the conclusion of this dignified and affecting prayer, Boadicea departed to prepare for battle.

This appeal to Adraste, the female goddess, is rendered so much the more affecting, when we learn that no less than five thousand females had enlisted in the cause of their royal countrywoman, wholly bent to avenge her wrongs, or perish in the contest.<sup>2</sup> This was peculiarly meritorious, as every individual who went to the war with the sovereign, took his or her own expenses, the service being esteemed one of honour to those who engaged in it.<sup>3</sup> In those times the women had no less courage than the men, and on all occasions like the present, every stout British maiden or married woman, unless about to become a mother, marched with her husband and brothers to the defence of her country. Even the women advanced in years accompanied the army, encouraging the men to valour, and assailing the enemy on their approach with stones, while the younger of their sex fought among the ranks, side by side with the men. On departing for the strife, they had a religious custom of slaying the first living creature that they found, in whose blood they not only bathed their swords, but also tasted the same, in the assurance that they were about to obtain some great and noted victory. Many hoary priestesses followed the British armies, clad in white garments bound with a brazen girdle, and having their feet naked, whose office it was to sacrifice the prisoners of war, and by these victims predict the success of the strife. To render themselves competent to share the dangers of the field of battle, the British women laboured incessantly to equal the opposite sex in strength; despising alike heat and cold, they travelled barefoot or in rude carriages, and had their food trussed behind them on their horses or their own shoulders, never refusing to undergo any labour or fatigue assigned to them by their leader.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Andate, or Andraste, was the British Goddess of Victory, who had a temple at Camalodunum, and to whom the Britons sacrificed their prisoners of war. — *Ancient Universal History, from Dion Cassius.*

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> A woman of the Cimbri, rather than survive a defeat, would kill even her own flying relatives, and having strangled her infant, and cast it beneath the

The Britons, animated by the speech of their heroic Queen, set out against the Romans; Boadicea first attacking the colony of Camalodunum.<sup>1</sup>

The following account is given of the state of Camalodunum, which yet was incomplete, or in progress, and laid out, as will be seen, rather for pleasure than security, while it was rendered defenceless by the abstraction of its garrison of veterans:—"Camalodunum, the standing court or palace royal of their kings, while Cymbeline lived, was now become the centre of pleasant retirement to the Romans, not the rendezvous of their power. The outside state of the town seemed very flourishing; for, besides the old palace, and other buildings of the Britons (for the Romans, saith Segonius, did not use to destroy the buildings they found), it had a senate-house for consultations, *a theatre for plays*, that goodly Temple of Claudius, and undoubtedly, as well they as the rest, answerable to the Roman magnificence. The colony lay open on all sides, the better to enjoy free walks and air about; yet safety was not altogether neglected, though pleasure was rather sought than strength.<sup>2</sup> It had no trench, no palisades, nor other defence about itself; but it had the majestie of the Roman name (a reputed wall of brass), the aire of a fresh conquest, and sundrie strength in the marches or pale of the province, where the Roman garrison watched and warded in castles, sconces, and other presidiary places."<sup>3</sup>

The city was, as may even yet be observed by the ancient remains, in a progressive and imperfect state, and on this account was chosen by the Britons as their first point of attack;<sup>4</sup> they had another and a still stronger reason, the great hatred they entertained for the veteran soldiers.

The inhabitants of the colony are said to have had warnings of their approaching ruin. A noise as if of contention was heard in the court,

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chariot-wheels, ended the horrid scene by her own self-destruction. Lucius Antoninus, one of the Roman generals in Britain, in making application to Rome for fresh succours, stated that their enemies were never more cruel and fierce, not only the men, but also the women, who cared not for the loss of their own lives, so that they might die revenged.—*Holinshed*.

<sup>1</sup> This celebrated place, first taken by Claudius, A. D. 44, and garrisoned with veterans of the second, ninth and fourteenth legions, had since that period been the seat of the Roman government, being sometimes also called Colonia, as appears from some money of Claudius, inscribed COL. CAMALODVN; and by medals the Emperor had struck in honour of his conquest, bearing on one side his own effigies, with the legend, "TI. CLAUD. CÆS. AUG. GER. P. M. T. R. P. XII., IMP. XIIX.;" and on the reverse a plough, drawn by an ox and a cow yoked, driven by a man; above them, COL. CAMALODUNUM AUG." Plautius, the proprætor of Camalodunum, had been recalled A. D. 48, after which Ostorius Scapula, his successor, had withdrawn the chief part of the veteran legions from the place; to which measure is attributable the destruction of the colony by Boadicea; because the Trinobantes, who had been awed by the presence of that military force, were thus encouraged to unite with the Queen's forces in their stroke for freedom.

<sup>2</sup> According to Tacitus, "the Roman generals attended to improvements of taste or elegance, but neglected the useful. They embellished the province, but took no care to defend it."

<sup>3</sup> History of Colchester.

<sup>4</sup> Hoare. Notes on Giraldus Cambrensis.

and a great tumult in the theatre, that scene of vicious entertainment which had been censured by Boadicea, in her address to the Britons; for she knew that they participated in these entertainments, and had become accustomed to intermingle familiarly with their former enemies. Perhaps the Druidesses were concerned in these supposed supernatural sounds—for such they were considered, “seeing that no man there either spake or mourned.”<sup>1</sup> These weird priestesses seem to have been acquainted with the art of ventriloquism, and were in some of their mysteries accustomed to conceal themselves in certain recesses, and by giving forth sentences or sounds when invisible to their listeners, to create the utmost astonishment.<sup>2</sup> The signs of the approaching calamity, as viewed by the Romans of Camalodunum, prove them to have been quite as superstitious as their less-informed neighbours, the Britons. Certain houses or buildings, appearing like a colony in ruins, are said to have been seen in the river Thames, and the sea between the island and Gaul appeared to flow with blood.<sup>3</sup> To crown all these evil omens, the image of the goddess Victoria set up by Claudius, *without any apparent cause*, fell from its base, and lay extended on the ground, with its face averted, as if that deity yielded to the enemies of Rome. This last certainly looks much like a contrivance of the Druids, which is the more probable, as women are said to have rushed here and there, in restless ecstasy among the people, with frantic screams, denouncing impending ruin: “Destruction is at hand! destruction is at hand!” Such were the hideous clamours heard “*in a foreign accent*,”<sup>4</sup> which are said to have penetrated even into the very council-chamber of the Romans, filling their hearts with terror and dismay, so that they clearly perceived that secret enemies mixed in all their deliberations. Suddenly, while an undefined fear was on the people of Camalodunum, Boadicea, with her countless multitude, appeared before the place. The Romans had but a few soldiers, and in the utmost alarm, sent off to Catus Decianus, procurator of the province, for a reinforcement. That officer could spare only two hundred men, and those but half armed, to assist them in their great extremity. It appears, however, that the temple of Claudius was strongly fortified, and there they resolved to make their stand, without, however, concerting any measures for their defence, being

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, Speed.

<sup>2</sup> An oracular stone is mentioned by the author of the “Celtic Druids,” known by the name of “the Great Cannon:” it rests upon a bed of rock, where a road plainly appears to have been made, leading to the hole, which, at the entrance, is three feet wide, six feet deep, and about three feet six inches high. Within this aperture, on the right hand, is a round hole, two feet diameter, perforated quite through the rock, sixteen feet, and running from south to north. In the above-mentioned aperture a man might be concealed, and predict future events to those that came to consult the oracle, and be heard distinctly on the north side of the rock, where the hole is not visible. This might make the credulous Britons think the predictions proceeded solely from the rock deity. The voice on the outside was distinctly conveyed to the person in the aperture, as was several times tried. The circumference of this rock is ninety-six feet.

<sup>3</sup> “The sea was purpled with blood, and at the ebb tide the figures of human bodies were traced on the sand.”—*Tacitus*.

<sup>4</sup> Tacitus.

taken so entirely by surprise, from the profound peace which had seemed to exist around them prior to this unexpected assault, that neither palisade nor ditch was thrown up, nor were any of the women, the aged, or infirm, sent out of the garrison. The colony was therefore taken with ease, and laid waste with fire and sword; the temple, where the military had sought to secure themselves, was laid siege to by the Queen and her exulting chiefs, and after holding out for two days, was taken by storm. Such was the carnage, that it is computed not less than from 70,000 to 80,000 fell on the occasion, aged persons, women, and children, alike falling victims to the Britons' too just fury. It is necessary to the veracity of history to add, awful as the picture is to contemplate, that the mandates of carnage were given by the stern Queen herself. Her vengeance extended yet further, being, as is generally believed, excited by the conduct of Suetonius in Anglesey, on whom she was desirous of retorting, by her cruel justice; nor can the horrors of Paganism appear in darker colours, than the picture of this revenge. Punishments, even for the women,<sup>1</sup> were invented, too hideous to be contemplated, that in nothing should the Romans be outdone in evil.

After this terrible sacrifice to vengeance, both the priests and warriors indulged in carousing and feasting in the wood called Andates, and in the several temples, especially that of the goddess Andate, invoked by Boadicea in her address. Boadicea then headed her warriors again, and set forth in quest of further victory. It was, no doubt, by the great Roman road which led from Colchester through the middle of the county of Essex, towards Bishop Stortford, &c., in Hertfordshire, that Boadicea pursued her course. This way is, in modern days, known as Stane Street.

Petilius Cerealis, at the time when these dreadful occurrences took place, was at Verulam, and marching in haste thence towards Colchester, "to rescue that which was already lost," was encountered by the furious Britons.<sup>2</sup> The ninth legion, under the command of the renowned conqueror of Batavia, was routed, the foot-soldiers *all slain*, and Petilius himself, with his cavalry, was forced to escape to his camp for safety, where he entrenched himself for a time, "not daring to attempt anything farther." The pursuit was followed up with great slaughter, 6000 Romans being slain, and about 3000 of the confederate Britons. Catus, the procurator, was in the engagement, and, being wounded, made his escape into Gaul.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Of whom some of the noblest were treated by Boadicea, as they had been by Suetonius. Nero was, in the end, obliged to recal Suetonius, because he was considered an unfit person to compose the alarmed minds of the Britons, from having both permitted and inflicted so many cruelties.—*Hume*.

<sup>2</sup> The ninth legion had received an accession of force from Germany, of eight auxiliary cohorts and one thousand horse.—*Tacitus*.

<sup>3</sup> "At the bare tidings of the disasters encountered by the Romans, Catus, like a tall man, took to his heels, and sailed into Gallia."—*Speed*. "Posthumus, the camp-master, durst not resist Boadicea, and refused to fight against her; indeed such terror had she infused into her enemies, that this fear had become quite general."—*Tacitus*.



After the conquest of Camalodunum, the Queen had been joined by the forces of her brother, the King of Scots, who had aided her in the defeat of Petilius<sup>1</sup> and his troops.

The successful Boadicea pursued her career towards Verulam, at that time a place of greater importance than London itself, the royal seat of Cassibelanunus; it had become a 'municipium' of the Romans. A municipium was very different from a colony, such as Camalodunum, which was a city from which the inhabitants were expelled, to make way for the new-comers;<sup>2</sup> it was an enfranchised city, which possessed every privilege of Roman citizens, "having senators, knights, and commons; magistrates and priests, censors, ediles, quæstors, and flamens."<sup>3</sup>

The devotion shown by the Britons of Verulam to their conquerors, had obtained for them this signal favour; and it was to punish them for this, and for their secession from the customs and religion of their ancestors, that Boadicea was induced to attack the town. Verulam had been compassed with walls by the Romans, and the great Watling Street, by which the warlike Queen had approached the place, passed quite through the city. The modern St. Albans has been erected within the limits of the ancient city; but though some portion of its walls were standing in the days of Holinshed, and by him described as substantially built, the modern ruins do not afford much information of the extent of the original foundations. Of the richness and beauty of the place, a better idea may be obtained from the researches made in the reign of the Saxon King Edgar, by Eldred, then Abbot of St. Albans, who was desirous of enlarging the religious establishment there, which had been founded by Offa, King of the Mercians. It occurred to the zealous prelate that some relics of the ancient Roman Verulam might be obtained, and on digging amid the ruins, he discovered a number of pillars, portions of antique work, thresholds, door-frames, and sundry other pieces of fine masonry for windows, &c., well adapted for the purpose of beautifying the religious structure he desired to adorn. Of these also, "some were of porphyrite stone, some of divers kinds of marble, touch, and alabaster, besides many curious devices of hard metal; in finding whereof, he thought himself an happy man, and his success to be greatly guided by St. Alban."<sup>4</sup> The good abbot also found "many pillars of brass, and sockets of latten, alabaster, and touch, all which he laid aside by great heaps, intending to employ them in laying the foundation of a new abbey, but died before he could commence the building."<sup>5</sup> The examination of the things already discovered by Eldred, was prosecuted by his successor, Abbot Eadmer, and led to a further search in the ancient walls of the city, which was rewarded by the discovery of numerous other pieces "of excellent workmanship." The emissaries of the abbot, in the progress of their researches, came to some vaults underground, "in which stood certain idols, and a number of altars, very superstitiously and religiously adorned, as

<sup>1</sup> Agricola served under Petilius "in an ordinary capacity, [A. D. 70.] and shared the common dangers of the war." [Tacitus.] Petilius Cerealis had encountered the Brigantes in many battles, Venusius holding him at bay, and remaining to the last unconquered. [Milton.]

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Pennant.

<sup>4</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

the pagans had most probably left them in time of necessity. The images were formed of sundry metals, and some of them of pure gold, and the altars were richly covered. Eadmer removed all the ornaments from the altars, and appropriated them to his own building, and destroyed an immense number of these idols, which were only admirable for beauty of construction, but unavailable in point of material. Many curious pots, jugs, and cruses of stone and wood were taken up by him, most artificially wrought and carved, with an immense quantity of household stuff, as if the whole furniture of the city had been brought thither for the purpose of being hid in the vaults." The spot of this singular discovery seems to have been used as a place of burial; for Eadmer is said to have found there pots of gold, silver, brass, glass, and earth, some of which were filled with ashes and bones, and the mouths turned downwards, which vessels being broken in pieces by the abbot, the metal was melted, and reserved for the purpose of garnishing the church.<sup>1</sup>

The fact of the discovery of such a quantity of rich furniture, in such a spot, is accounted for by the alarm which the people naturally felt on the approach of the Queen, after her recent successes. The wealth of the place is expressly mentioned as one of the causes for the attack of Boadicea, it being the site of one of the British Mints: the word VER may be distinguished on the coins, though the name of the reigning prince is not legible.<sup>2</sup>

This noble seat of Roman grandeur combined with British industry, shared the fate of Camalodunum, being laid waste with fire and sword;<sup>3</sup> and so general a scene of carnage ensued, that the loss of the Romans and their allies, on the occasion, is said to have amounted to 70,000 men.<sup>4</sup> The fate of the municipium has been chronicled by the pen of Spenser, who, in character of the Genius of the place, says:—

"I was that city which the garland wore  
Of Britain's pride, delivered unto me  
By Roman victors, which it won of yore;  
Though nought at all but ruins now I be,  
And lie in mine own ashes, as ye see.  
Verlame I was: what boots it what I was,  
Sith now I am but weeds and wasteful grass?"

*Ruins of Time.*

It is necessary to turn from the footsteps of the ruthless Boadicea, and to trace the progress of the Roman general from Mona, where he was staying at the time of these signal losses.

Suetonius, on receiving news of these disasters, quitted Anglesey, and with the greatest intrepidity marched through a hostile country towards London,<sup>5</sup> by the great British road, called Watling street,<sup>6</sup> which ran

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed; who observes that "numbers of vessels of a similar kind, though of finer earth, of six or eight gallons a piece, were found, A.D. 1578, in a well at Little Massingham, in Norfolk: and also in Henry VIII.'s reign, containing old British coins and those of the Roman Emperors."

<sup>2</sup> Pennant.

<sup>3</sup> Girald. Cambrensis.

<sup>4</sup> Tacitus, Speed, C. Daniel, Howel.

<sup>5</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis.

<sup>6</sup> The noted Watling Street, which was the direct road from Chester (the city of the Legions) to Dover, did not enter London, [Dr. Stukeley,] but in its course

immediately from Wales by Wroxeter Wall, High Cross, Towcester and Verulam, to London; and necessarily he was compelled to pass through the dominions of the Iceni in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the many difficulties and dangers which necessarily attended this progress through a hostile country, Suetonius Paulinus succeeded in reaching London in safety.

The Roman general was at first doubtful, whether he should not fix on that place as the seat of the war; many considerations, however, deterred him; and the smallness of his own army, as well as the fatal temerity of Petilius, made him determine by the sacrifice of one province to secure the rest.<sup>2</sup> Vain were the prayers and tears of the wretched inhabitants, nothing could shake the resolution of Paulinus, or divert him from his plan, when once laid out in his own mind. The signal for a march was given, and those only were left behind who by advanced age or weakness could not follow.<sup>3</sup>

The Queen had not forgotten that in the season of her deepest sorrows, when all other Britons had flocked from every quarter of the island to her standard, the Londoners alone had hung back; this act had marked them out as objects of especial indignation and vengeance, and too soon was her wrath to fall on all that were found; she advanced upon the city, took it, and put to the sword all that were found. Thus had she well gained the surnames of "the Warlike" and "the Victorious!"

A change was, however, at hand; the wheel of fortune was turning, and the period that was to terminate her frantic vengeance was approaching. Suetonius, though he had forsaken the city of London, had not removed far distant, having encamped his forces in the neighbourhood, in a quadrangle of about 130 feet in extent.<sup>4</sup>

It was a moment of terrible excitement for the contending parties, when the respective leaders, prior to the contest which was to decide their fortunes, impressed upon the multitudes who were assembled, their hopes of success and sentiments of patriotic courage and enthusiasm. With very different hopes were they inspired. The Queen's countless throng, elated with conquest, and certain of success, was without order of battle. Their wives and children were brought with them, as witnesses of their valour,<sup>5</sup> or assistants in the fight, while those intended as spectators only, were placed in waggons around the spot fixed on for their engagement. The waggons or carts used as land carriages by the Britons prior to the introduction of the conveniences and luxuries of life by the Romans, were thus employed in warlike expeditions, and the chariots

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from Verulam, and Elstree or Snellamasis, crossed the Oxford road at Tyburn, and thence ran to the west of Westminster [Higden] over the Thames, and onward into Kent. From Tyburn this road proceeded over part of Hyde Park by May Fair, "through St. James's Park to the street by Old Palace Yard, called the Wool Staple, to the Thames; there formerly stood an old gate, one part of the arch of which is still left, but not Roman. On the opposite side of the river is Stane Gate Ferry, which is the continuation of this street to Canterbury, and so to the three famous sea-ports, Rutupiae, Dubius, and Lemannis."

<sup>1</sup> Hoare's Notes on Girald. Cambrensis.

<sup>2</sup> Girald. Cambrensis.

<sup>3</sup> Tacitus, Speed,

<sup>4</sup> Hone's Every-Day Book.

<sup>5</sup> Sharon Turner.



they used as conveyances for travelling accommodation being rendered equally available both for peace and war. On the chariots of war, however, immense drums were constructed, by stretching skins over them, which emitted very powerful sounds.

The British chariots, called by them *Esseda*, and by Tacitus *Covini*, were guided by the principal warrior; the Britons esteeming it most honourable to drive the car into the thickest of the enemy's ranks, and to distinguish themselves by braving every danger: it was the custom for a number of combatants to mount together on the same vehicle. The practice of fighting in chariots, in use among the Britons, has been compared to that among the Trojans of old, as described by Homer; but this difference existed with the Greeks and Trojans, that the driver of the chariot was secondary in rank to the chief of high renown who fought.

In one of these warlike cars, such as we have described in the history of Cartismandua, appeared Boadicea and her two daughters, who sat before her. The Queen drove through the ranks of her faithful followers, and, in turn, addressed herself to the several nations who had assembled in her behalf: "This was not," she said, "the first time that the Britons had been led to battle by a woman; but now she did not come to boast the pride of a long line of ancestry, nor even to recover her kingdom and the plundered wealth of her family." She took the field, like the meanest among them, to assert the cause of public liberty, and to seek revenge for her body, seamed with ignominious stripes, and her two daughters, injured beyond forgiveness.

"But the avenging gods," urged the Queen, "are now at hand. A Roman legion dared to face the warlike Britons; with their lives they paid for their rashness; those who survive the carnage of that day, lie poorly hid behind their entrenchments, meditating nothing but how to save themselves by an ignominious flight. From the din of preparation, and the shouts of the British army, the Romans even now shrink back with terror;—what will be the case when the assault begins? Look round and view your numbers. Behold the proud display of warlike spirits, and consider the motives for which we draw the avenging sword. On this spot we must either conquer, or die with glory: there is no alternative. Though a woman, my resolution is fixed; the men, if they please, may survive with infamy, and live in bondage."<sup>1</sup>

The army of Suetonius amounted to 10,000 men, while that of Boadicea was said to be 230,000. The Romans consisted of the 14th Legion,<sup>2</sup> the standard-bearers of the 12th, and the vexillarii of the 20th Legion, which was under the command of Agricola: there were various reinforcements from the neighbouring places besides. Pœnius Posthumus, master of the 2nd Legion, called Augusta, had been appointed to lead the forward-guard, but refused the orders of his general with contempt, and withdrew from the approaching engagement; after the battle, he was so grieved at having lost his share of the glory, that he slew himself.<sup>3</sup> The great disparity of men between the Roman and British forces, would

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Girald. Cambrensis, Speed.



have deterred Suetonius from hazarding an engagement, had he not been greatly distressed from want of provisions. He, however, relied on the Roman valour, and prior to the onset, addressed his soldiers in terms calculated to animate them to do their utmost. "Despise," he said, "the savage uproar, the yells and shouts of undisciplined barbarians. In that mixed multitude the women outnumber the men. Void of spirit, unprovided with arms, they are not soldiers who come to offer battle; they are dastard runaways, the refuse of your swords, who have often fled before you, and will again betake themselves to flight, when they see the conqueror flaming in the ranks of war. In all engagements it is the valour of a few that turns the fortune of the day. It will be your immortal glory, that with a scanty number you can equal the exploits of a great and powerful army. Keep your ranks, discharge your javelins, rush forward to a close attack; bear down all with your bucklers, and hew a passage with your swords! Pursue the vanquished, and never think of spoil and plunder. Conquer, and victory gives you everything."<sup>1</sup>

The engagement began. The Roman legion presented a close embodied line: the narrow defile gave them the shelter of a rampart. The Britons advanced with ferocity, and discharged their darts at random. In that instant the Romans rushed forward in the form of a wedge; the auxiliaries followed with equal ardour; the cavalry, at the same time, bore down the enemy, and, with their pikes, overpowered all who dared to make a stand. The Britons betook themselves to flight, but their waggons in the rear obstructed their passage. A dreadful slaughter followed: the cattle falling in one promiscuous carnage, added to the heaps of the slain. Tacitus, who gives the foregoing account, concludes by remarking, that "the glory of the day was equal to the most splendid victory of ancient times!"—a confession somewhat humbling to the Roman's pride, one would think, who has just before admitted the greater number of the foe consisted of *women*. Dion Cassius assures us, that the field was not won without difficulty. The cruelty and sanguinary conduct of the Britons on former occasions, were now, if possible, exceeded by the Romans. It is said that not less than 80,000 Britons were left dead on the field, while of the Romans, 400 only were slain, and as many wounded. The surviving Romans interred their vanquished foes, according to their quality, near the place where the battle was fought, known to this day, from the circumstance, as *Battle Bridge*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus.

<sup>2</sup> The ancient camp, called Ambresbury Banks, near Epping, has by some been considered the scene of the final defeat of Boadicea by Suetonius. "To me," says Gough, "it appears rather to have been a resting-place for the Queen's army after her march from Camalodunum." This spot, which is opposite the park of Copt Hall, and on the south-east side of the London road, was described by Smart Lethieullier, Esq., in a letter to the celebrated antiquary, Mr. Gough. "This entrenchment is now entirely overgrown with old oaks and hornbeams. It was formerly in the very heart of the forest, and no road near it, till the present turnpike-road from London to Epping was made (almost within the memory of man) which now runs within a hundred yards of it; but the entrenchment cannot be thence perceived, by reason of the wood that covers it. It is of an irre-

The conduct of Pœnius Posthumus, after the successful termination of the engagement has been mentioned already. The 11th, 13th, and 14th Legions were liberally rewarded for their bravery by Nero.

Boadicea, on beholding the entire overthrow of her army, determined to put an end at once to her life and misfortunes. Her own lofty spirit was unsubdued, but she scorned to become the spectacle of common gaze in a Roman triumph, as she full well remembered was the fate of her brother, the noble Caractacus, nor could she stoop to be the vassal of her conquerors' will. Like Cleopatra, she determined by poison to terminate her existence, consistently preserving to the last the faith she held with her people, whom in her speech she had assured that she would not survive a defeat, to live either in infamy or bonds.

The heroic and unfortunate Queen was interred with honour by her faithful British followers. Some, who think the last decisive battle was fought near Winchester, then a royal city, say that her remains were carried thither in state for interment;<sup>1</sup> but so divided are historians on the subject, that Salisbury Plain has been asserted to be the site of the fierce contest, and Stonehenge itself the spot where the bones of the Queen were laid.

This mysterious monument, the *Cor Gaur* of the Britons, would, indeed, have been fitting for the resting-place of a woman so renowned, whose "great despair" required some emblem which should, for ages after her, excite awe, terror, and amazement in the mind.

Boadicea, during thirty-two years, had enjoyed the rank and dignity of a queen, without either prosperity or happiness accompanying the regal honours. Deserted by her husband for another, her children branded as illegitimate, she had evinced, under every trial, a spirit worthy of her race. On being restored to the position she formerly enjoyed as queen-consort, she employed her influence for the benefit of the people, and kept faith with the Romans till, on her husband's death, they themselves roused, by their conduct, the spirit of "the Lioness," as Gildas calls her, and brought upon them her resentment and revenge. Even long before, her heart must have bled for the bitter trials of her gallant bro-

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gular figure, rather longest from east to west, and on a gentle declivity to the south-east. It contains nearly twelve acres, and is surrounded by a ditch and a high bank, much worn down by time; though where there are angles, they are still very bold and high. There are no regular openings like gateways or entrances, only two places where the bank has been cut through, and the ditch filled up very lately, in order to make a straight road from Debden Green to Epping Market. The boundary between the parishes of Waltham and Epping runs exactly through the middle of this entrenchment; whether carried so casually by the first settlers of those boundaries, or on purpose, as it was then a remarkable spot of ground, I leave to better judgments to conjecture. As I can find no reason to attribute this entrenchment either to the Romans, Saxons, or Danes, I cannot help concluding it to have been a British oppidum, and perhaps had some relation to other remains of that people, which are discoverable in our forest. It is distant from Fifeild, where the cells and forge were lately discovered, about ten miles; and about eight from Navestoke Common, where we visited the *Templum Alatum*."—*Gough's Camden, in Essex*, vol. ii. p. 49.

<sup>1</sup> Hoare (see Notes on Girald. Camb.) says the spot is extremely doubtful; it was certainly south of London, and he thinks somewhere in Surrey.

ther Caractacus, whom she had beheld given up, after his honourable defence of her own wrongs, to the insults of his enemies, and led in triumph to Rome. Boadicea the Warlike, displayed on all occasions, an heroic spirit and incredible valour, worthy of the celebrity she obtained in her own and succeeding times.

Many Britons were taken prisoners in the last fatal battle, but, nevertheless, great numbers had escaped. These would have renewed the contest, but the death of the Queen defeated their purpose, and they were forced to submit to their fate and to disperse.<sup>1</sup> At the close of the battle, the two unfortunate sisters, daughters of Boadicea, completely armed, were still fighting on the field. The Romans made them their prisoners, and conducted them to the presence of Suetonius, who, to his honour, expressed to them the greatest indignation at the treatment they had formerly experienced, and promised to make whatever reparation was possible.<sup>2</sup> Nor did he falsify his word. The eldest princess was married, a few months after, by his arrangement, to Marius, the Roman who had wronged her,<sup>3</sup> and whom historians call the brother-in-law of Boadicea, the youngest daughter of the late Queen,<sup>4</sup> who, with her mother's name, inherited her undaunted character and her misfortunes.

Marius was crowned with a golden crown, and appointed to govern part of the conquered country; the district was in the neighbourhood of Kendal, and the prince being called also "Westmer," it derived from him the denomination "Westmereland."<sup>5</sup> It was peaceably ruled by this prince during five years, the whole of which time he maintained amity with his protectors, the Romans, and distinguished himself by prudence, valour, and wisdom. Coel, his son, received a Roman education, and succeeded to the throne in after-years, paying the usual tribute-money to the Emperors: his son Lucius was the first Christian King of the Britons, of whom mention will be made in the history of Gwenissa. Marius died A. D. 78, and was interred at Carlisle.

A fear of the rival claims of Boadicea, the sister of his wife, had induced Marius to banish her from his territories, she being entitled to share the queenly honours of her sister. Her fate was as disastrous as that of her mother, and she had shared every vicissitude of her fortune; and though the wife of Marius withdrew from the struggle, her spirit was yet unconquered. The subjects of Marius were hers by right of inheritance, and loyally attached to her service and person, as well as to that of her sister. Her cousin, Corbred Gald, King of Scots, had been her associate in infancy; and gratitude for his nurture, entitled her to expect his support and assistance in opposition to the Roman power. Boadicea accordingly assembled a numerous army composed of Britons, men of Brigantia and of the Isle of Man, resolving to struggle for the vengeance which she still considered incomplete. She put to sea with her forces, and landed in Galloway, the whole of which was at that time in possession of the Romans, and at Epiake they had fixed their headquarters.

<sup>1</sup> Stowe, Milton.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Scott, Holinshed.

<sup>4</sup> Hearne's Curious Discourses.

<sup>5</sup> Holinshed.

The precise spot where the younger Boadicea landed is not stated; but she is said immediately after to have marched in the dead of night, unknown to the Romans, to the place where her enemies had encamped. Coming thus suddenly on the tents of the unprepared Romans, Boadicea and the Britons slew many of their most valiant leaders with their soldiers, and would have entirely destroyed the whole of their forces, had not Petilius, the Roman general, been alarmed, and prepared great lights or torches of pitch and resin, which being thrown into the faces of Boadicea's troops, enabled him to discover and repulse them. By this means the Romans gained time to put themselves in order and defend their camp until the morning; for being apprehensive of further danger, they did not quit their tents to pursue the flight. When daylight arrived, they made an onset on the Britons and put them to the rout.<sup>1</sup> Next day Boadicea went to Epiake, which she fired, and in it the whole Roman garrison was destroyed.

It was some little time afterwards that Petilius pursued and routed the followers of the Princess Boadicea, and made her his prisoner; it occurred in the following manner:—A Roman legion<sup>2</sup> had been deputed to seize her person, and by means of using great expedition, laid an ambush, by which stratagem they contrived to enclose her with a great part of her followers. On being captured a second time, expecting to be put to a barbarous death, she is said to have followed the example of the Queen, her mother, and put a period to her existence. Other writers affirm that she was brought alive into the presence of Petilius, and interrogated by him respecting her enterprise; upon her making a courageous answer, she was slain on the spot by his soldiers: it is not, however, certain that Petilius himself either designed or commanded the death of Boadicea the Younger.<sup>3</sup>

Agricola, on returning to Rome after the defeat and death of Boadicea, was, for his brilliant successes, raised to the patrician rank by Vespasian, and soon after to the government of Aquitaine. Tacitus writes thus of him, during his consulship: "Though I was then very young, he agreed to a marriage between me and his daughter, who certainly might have looked for a prouder connexion." The nuptial ceremony was not performed till the term of his consulship expired. Soon after Agricola was appointed Governor of Britain, with the additional honor of a seat in the pontifical college. He arrived in Britain A. D. 78, and governed during the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. Having resolved to subjugate the island, and render it of actual service to Rome, he carried his arms northward, defeating the Britons in nearly every encounter.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> A legion consisted of six thousand men; a cohort was six hundred—a tenth of a legion, though "chief cohorts" sometimes contained a thousand men.—*Rapin*.

<sup>3</sup> The following year, A. D. 73, Petilius was succeeded by Julius Frontinus, a man of eminence and information, distinguished as a lawyer and soldier, and as much renowned for virtue as talent.

<sup>4</sup> In a decisive action which took place in Caledonia, in the neighbourhood of the Grampian Hills, the Scots, with their heroic chieftain, Galgacus, were de-



Agricola, who had previously subdued all the southern states, after the defeat of Galgacus, fixed a chain of garrisons between the Firths of Clyde and Forth, to secure the Roman province—for such Britain had at last become—from the invasion of the northern barbarians.<sup>1</sup> Another important and glorious act was performed by his orders. The Roman fleet sailed round the northern point, and made the first certain discovery that Britain was an island. The cluster of islands called Orcades, till then wholly unknown, were in this expedition added to the Roman empire; “Thule, which had been concealed in the gloom of winter, and a depth of eternal snows, was also seen by our navigators.”

Pennant believed that the Roman fleet anchored under the rock of Dumbarton Castle on one occasion. A fragment of an old building crowning one of the summits, has been conjectured to be the remains of a Roman pharos, or light-house. Agricola's rampart, and that raised by Lollius Urbicus, terminated in this neighbourhood, and traces of the latter (raised under Antoninus Pius, and popularly known as Graham's Dyke) may be seen not far from Dumbarton.

The Castle of Dumbarton, or Dun Briton, signifies “Town of the Britons.” This ancient fortress was originally called Arcluid or Alcluid, “the Place on the Clyde,” and was capital first of the Caledonians, and afterwards of a British or Welsh kingdom established in that district. It is fifteen miles from Glasgow. Bede, who wrote in the eighth century, says in his time it was one of the chief British fortresses. It was afterwards taken and held by the Saxons, and recovered again from them by the Picts. At last, in 756, Edbert, the Northumbrian king, forced the garrison to surrender for want of provisions.

feated, the loss on the side of the Britons being estimated at 100,000 men. [Sir R. Philipps, Tacitus.] The speech of the heroic pupil and nephew of Queen Boadicea on this occasion, which is given in the pages of Tacitus, strongly sets forth the oppression of the Romans, their ambitious artifices, and their vices, and affords a noble sample of the genuine outpourings of a heart inspired by the spirit of true liberty. To use the language of the commentator of the historian who records the speech of Galgacus, “the ferocity of a savage, whose bosom glowed with the love of liberty, gives warmth and spirit to the whole speech. Neither the Greek nor the Roman page has anything to compare with it. The critics have admired the speech of Porus to Alexander; but excellent as it is, it shrinks and fades away before the Caledonian orator. Even the speech of Agricola, which follows immediately after it, is tame and feeble when opposed to the ardour, the impetuosity and the vehemence of the British chief.” [Murphy's Notes on Tacitus.] After the defeat and death of his sister Boadicea, Corbred, the Scottish King, had retired to his own dominions, where he died in peace, leaving three sons, all minors, Corbred, Talcan, and Brek; of whom the first had been educated by Queen Boadicea, and was surnamed “Gald,” or “Galgacus, “the Fighter of Battles.” [Holinshed.] Galgacus was buried at Dunstaffnage, where a sumptuous monument was erected to his memory, on which were engraved all his actions, and pillars were placed around his tomb. [Scott.]

<sup>1</sup> Murphy's Tacitus.

## GWENISSA THE FAIR.

Political influence of Women—A Deputation sent to Rome to fetch Gwenissa as the bride of Arviragus—Customs of Roman betrothals—Gwenissa's family—She is supposed to be illegitimate—Lines of Harding on the Marriage of Arviragus and Gwenissa—The flowery mead—Gloucester built in honour of the event—Crowns of gold—The Emperor Claudius returns to Rome—Festivities in his honour—Beauty of Gwenissa—The love of her Husband for her—Its transient duration—He breaks with Rome—Gwenissa as Winner of Peace—Vespasian remains in Britain—Asserted visit to Britain of Joseph of Arimathea—The Twelve Hides of Glaston—Change in the fortunes of Gwenissa—Arviragus forsakes her for Boadicea—She dies of grief in giving birth to her son Marius.

Here is a father now

Will truck his daughter for a foreign venture,  
Make her the stop-gap to some canker'd feud,  
Or fling her o'er, like Jonah, to the fishes,  
To appease the sea at highest.—*Sir Walter Scott (Old Play).*

Was never king more highly magnifide,  
Nor dredd of Romans, than was Arvirage.—*Spenser.*

THERE are few histories which do not present instances of the political influence of woman. The wife, the daughter, the mother, or the friend, has, in innumerable cases, become the arbitress of the destiny of an empire; and frequently has it happened, that her happiness, sometimes even her life has been offered up as a sacrifice to her country's welfare. Such was the case with Gwenissa, one of the most interesting queens of Roman Britain.

The circumstances of the divorce of Arviragus from Boadicea have been already recounted, and how he assented to the proposals of Claudius, to receive his daughter Gwenissa in marriage, after having made a formal declaration of his submission to the Roman empire. A deputation was therefore dispatched to Rome, to bring over to this country the royal lady who was to replace the repudiated Queen.

The laurel, the badge of joy and victory, was usually affixed by the Romans to their letters of dispatch after success against the enemy,<sup>1</sup> and was the emblem of the successful termination of the expedition undertaken by Claudius. It was also a custom, in the Roman form of betrothal, for the bridegroom to send to his bride a simple *iron* ring, which did not contain any stone, but was symbolical of the lasting bond of which it was the type. In Britain, as well as Gaul, at this time, these rings were worn on the middle finger.<sup>2</sup> At Rome, the number of rings on a person's hand denoted the high rank of the wearer, and many of these bore engravings of Harpocrates, and of the Egyptian deities. In

<sup>1</sup> And also placed on the spears and javelins of the soldiers.—*Pliny.*    <sup>2</sup> *Pliny.*

the reign of Claudius no gold seal or ring was permitted to bear the portrait of the Emperor, without an act of especial license; but Vespasian, some time after issued an edict permitting rings and brooches to bear the imperial image. The simple iron ring was accordingly conveyed to the Roman Princess by the ambassadors of the Emperor.

The beautiful Gwenissa, on her father's side, was directly descended from Anthony, the Triumvir, and the gentle and virtuous Octavia, sister of the Emperor Augustus. Antonia the younger, daughter of Octavia, by her marriage with Drusus, brother of Tiberius, had two sons, Germanicus, and Claudius—the father of Gwenissa, whose paternal ancestors were therefore the noblest in Rome. Her maternal relationships are not, however, so easily determined.

Shortly before Claudius had departed for Britain, he married Messalina, the mother of Octavia and Britannicus. By his first union with Plautia Urgulanilla, he had an only son. This lady, to whom he had been married in the reign of Tiberius, was repudiated by her husband with great ignominy, being convicted of infidelity, and other crimes. Claudia, the innocent offspring of her guilt, was condemned, at the age of five months, to be exposed at her mother's door. Subsequently to this, Claudius took Ælia Petina, a lady of high birth for his wife, her father being of consular dignity. After bearing a daughter to the Emperor, named Antonia, Ælia Petina was divorced, but on very slight grounds. Now, if Gwenissa was the legitimate daughter of Claudius, she must have been the offspring of his first or second marriage; yet is her name unnoticed by Suetonius, who enumerates, in exact succession, the several wives of Claudius, and mentions not only Antonia and Octavia, but even the illegitimate Claudia.<sup>1</sup> It appears more likely that Gwenissa was the daughter of Ælia Petina, than that Claudius should have offered to Arviragus a lady—only his daughter by adoption—in order to procure such a peace as might enable him to appear in Rome without disgrace; which is the opinion some commentators on this subject have adopted.<sup>2</sup>

On the site of the modern Hospice de l'Antiquaille, at Lyons, formerly stood the Roman palace of Claudius, who was a native of that city. There, at some period, the Emperor and his family had resided; but at the time of which we are writing, Messalina held her court in Rome. To Gwenissa, who was residing there under the care, it may be presumed, of a dangerous and too celebrated step-mother, the imperial embassy was addressed. The emissaries of Claudius departed from Britain in the autumn, and returned in the following spring, bringing over the young princess in safety.<sup>3</sup> The quaint lines of Harding thus record the arrival of the Roman bride:—

“Thene Claudius sente for dame Gennyce,  
His doughter fair, full womanly to see;  
She came in haste, as then it might suffice,

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<sup>1</sup> Grafton calls Gwenissa illegitimate.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. P. Roberts' Notes on British History.

<sup>3</sup> Geoff. of Monmouth, Brut y Tysilio.

To come oute from so farre lande and countrie,  
And in a mede with floures of greate beauté,  
Wedded they were; where Claudius then made  
A cytee fayre, Cayre Glowe' to name it had."

Gwenissa was welcomed with great honours on her arrival, and her reception from her aged father was affectionate in the extreme. The nuptial rite was afterwards performed with much solemnity,<sup>2</sup> as the poet relates—

"In a mede with floures of great beauté,"

in presence of the whole court of both the British King and Roman Emperor, their generals and the soldiery. So great a concourse must have required a much larger space than the customary dwellings of the Britons, and not inappropriately the royal espousals were celebrated under the broad expanse of the blue sky, with the enamelled carpet of green turf, bespangled with the first flowers and fairest promises of spring, spread out beneath the feet of the young and lovely bride.

The pageant at this inauspicious marriage was imposing, and the mind may easily picture the divers characters there assembled: the aged Emperor, his young daughter, the haughty Arviragus, who had made even his new father-in-law tremble by his power and bravery, and whose feelings must have been divided between exultation and remorse; the statesmen, the generals, and legions, contrasting with the rough and uncivilized forms and garb of the native Britons.

Like many other royal nuptials, the semblance of joy supplied the place of its reality. But to the young bride all seemed fair, and she appears to have been quite content with her lot. At her suggestion, Arviragus proposed to his father-in-law the erection of a new city on the scene of their espousals, commemorative of the occasion. Claudius willingly assented, and in person laid the foundation of a city to which he gave his own name, calling it Claudio-cestor, now Gloucester. It contained a temple to the Emperor in which, if Tacitus is to be depended on, he received the honors of a deity. The Romans ever worshipped their rulers, in the empire, with extravagance, and the affability and generosity Claudius testified towards the Britons, in which perhaps he was desirous of securing their future goodwill for his daughter, having made a very favorable impression, the Britons perhaps followed their example in this respect without disinclination.

The building of the Roman city proceeded with alacrity, and as soon as it was completed, a Roman military establishment was placed there, by consent of the Britons; in this arrangement Claudius testified not only his desire to secure his conquests, but to afford a security for the future safety of his daughter. An army of regular legions, and a large body of auxiliaries, had accompanied Claudius into Britain, from which due ar-

<sup>1</sup> William of Malmesbury ascribes the building of the city of Gloucester to Claudius, the father of Gloui, who, he says, was his son "by a British girl named Gewissa."

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, Harding, Tanner.



rangements were made by selecting the persons most fit to colonize the new Roman station.<sup>1</sup>

As if to leave nothing incomplete, the marriage of Arviragus and Gwenissa was a second time celebrated at Lud's Town, the capital of the Trinobantes, where it was followed by many regal festivities, and the crown was formally placed on the head of the British King and his Roman bride. The crowns of our ancient British sovereigns were mostly made of pure gold, though it appears from some ancient coins, that Cymbeline also wore a fillet of pearls.<sup>2</sup> They were worn on nearly all state occasions, whether in battle, in processions for religious festivities, or on the occasion of meeting in council, not only by the Kings, but the Queens also. We are expressly informed of an untoward accident which occurred to the Queen of Cathir the Great, whose golden crown was *stolen* from her at a grand convention, held at Tara, A. D. 141.<sup>3</sup> Some of these golden crowns were afterwards displayed by Claudius on his triumphal entry into Rome, among other spoils taken from the Britons; they were of beaten gold, and one—a present from Spain to the Emperor—weighed seven pounds, while another, he had received from that part of Gaul called Comata, weighed as much as nine pounds.<sup>4</sup> A British naval crown of gold was, moreover, placed by Claudius close by the civic crown, over the gate of the Imperial Palace of Rome, in token of his victory over the British sea, when he crossed it.<sup>5</sup>

The period of Claudius's visit to Britain is by some said to have been extended to two years, while others say a few months only. As soon as peace was established, and Arviragus settled in the government, as a tributary of Rome, the Emperor bade a final adieu to his son and daughter, and returned to Rome, being everywhere received with the honors of a conquering hero; a triumphal arch was erected at Boulogne, commemorative of his victories over the Britons. He entered Rome in triumph, attended by his captives of war; the Empress Messalina following him at a distance as he proceeded through the city, in a chariot magnificently adorned. On arriving at the capital, Claudius mounted the steps on his knees, supported on each side by his two sons-in-law, Silanus and Pompey.<sup>6</sup> The surname of Britannicus was awarded to the Emperor

<sup>1</sup> "About the middle of February, 1818, some men in the employment of Sir W. Hicks, Baronet, while digging up the roots of an old ash-tree, which they were employed to fell, at Cooper's Hill, about four miles from Gloucester, came to a large stone that excited their curiosity. On removing it, they discovered a flight of steps leading to an apartment, in the centre of which was a cistern about a yard square; in clearing the room, the skulls of a buffalo and a bullock, with horns complete, and the remains of a fireplace with a quantity of wood-ashes, were likewise found. A fortnight afterwards, four more apartments were discovered; in one of which is a very curious tessellated pavement (the tessera are cubes of about half-an-inch), also the remains of several urns and figured tiles of Roman pottery. The walls of one of the apartments, and also the passages, are painted in *fresco*, with alternate stripes of purple, yellow, and scarlet, all of which are beautifully shaded and curiously ornamented with scrolls and a border. These interesting remains of antiquity have probably existed for upwards of seventeen centuries."—*Journal of Science and the Arts*, 1818, No. IX, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Selden.

<sup>3</sup> O'Flaherty.

<sup>4</sup> Pliny.

<sup>5</sup> Echard.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

for his exploits; and he, on his part, directed it should be borne by his son by Messalina.<sup>1</sup> Presents of triumphal ornaments and chains of gold were adjudged to the several officers who had accompanied the expedition, as we find on record by inscriptions yet extant,<sup>2</sup> the senate moreover decreed that annual games should be established in honor of this event; and for some time after the return of Claudius, Rome was filled with every kind of festivity, dramatic representation, horse-races, bear-combats, pyrrhic dances, and gladiators.<sup>3</sup> Such were the rejoicings in commemoration of the peaceful conquest of Britain by Claudius, through the agency of his daughter's charms.<sup>4</sup>

That the personal attractions of the daughter of Claudius were of no mean stamp, is evident from her having been surnamed "the Fair." This Queen is only known to us by the name of Gwenissa, and not by the one she had borne in former years in the land of her birth. This is remarkable, but it was a custom with the Romans, and often with the Britons, to change the names of foreigners into their own peculiar dialect; and probably the fair stranger received hers from the Britons on account of her personal beauty, the word *Gwen* literally signifying, in the dialect of the island,<sup>5</sup> a "lovely" or "fair" woman: the Roman *Venusia*, or *Venus*, might have been associated, and the British *Gwenissa*, thus formed, which, if written in Saxon, is sometimes *Winifred* (the *g*, *v*, and *w* being often interchanged)—a name used by the Britons to designate "Fair Countenance," and by the Saxons a "Winner or Procurer of Peace."<sup>6</sup>

After the first splendours of her marriage were passed, and her father had departed, Gwenissa the Fair might, perhaps, have heaved more than one sigh for the luxurious scenes of her youth. Imperious destiny, however, had fixed in Britain her future home, and so great an ascendancy had the young Queen obtained over the mind of the fascinated Arviragus, that he seemed to value her as his chief good, while, by the gentle sway of beauty and goodness, she obtained from all those who surrounded his person, unqualified admiration.<sup>7</sup> The passion, however, which her beauty had illumined, was of transient duration. After a time, the "late remorse" of Arviragus awoke, to remind him that for her and her father's interest he had been compelled to divorce his earlier-chosen, and once not less-beloved Boadicea, and that the mother of his children was suffering for her sake. Perhaps Arviragus, who had steeled himself against the pangs of conscience for a time, became their prey when he was able to perceive the true state of his circumstances, and that his apparently splendid position was simply a condition of slavery. Impatient at his bondage, he at length resolved to assume, in his own person, the grandeur and consequence of a sovereign, and to assert his power over both the Romans and British people, whom he had been appointed by Claudius to rule merely as his deputy. Haughty, arrogant, and overbearing, his conduct displeased the civilized Romans so much, that not choosing to submit to

<sup>1</sup> Echard.<sup>2</sup> Pliny.<sup>3</sup> S. Turner.<sup>4</sup> Univ. Hist., S. Turner.<sup>5</sup> Josephus.<sup>6</sup> Butler's Lives.<sup>7</sup> Geoff. of Monmouth.

the ostentatious display of wealth and power in a barbarian, they resented his attempt. Arviragus took this as a pretext for breaking off his faith with his allies, the countrymen and friends of his Queen. Information was forwarded to Claudius that Arviragus had declared his independence, on which the Emperor despatched Vespasian to reduce him to obedience. The struggle was again renewed, and the Roman general laid siege to Exeter. Arviragus marched to its relief, and a battle took place, in which much loss was sustained on both sides. At this critical juncture, the character of Gwenissa shines forth in a very pleasing light. She had been much afflicted by the hostilities which had arisen between her father and her husband, and undertook, in person, the difficult task of arranging an accommodation between the hostile parties. The day after the battle, Gwenissa, in her character of the "Winner of Peace," had an interview first with one party, and then with the other, and through the influence of her beauty and solicitations, succeeded in reconciling them to each other. The result of her successful mediation was, that the Romans and Britons united their rival forces, and proceeded in harmony to London in each other's company, and afterwards Arviragus paid the tribute-money to Vespasian, as formerly agreed upon with the Emperor.<sup>1</sup>

The especial request of Queen Gwenissa detained Vespasian in Britain, during the following winter.<sup>2</sup> The unsettled state of the country made her consider the presence of this distinguished leader in some measure necessary to her own safety, and the late defection of her husband might have raised some suspicion of his fidelity to herself in her mind. This, the prolonged stay of Vespasian was calculated to dispel, and welcome, no doubt, must the society of this brave and excellent man have been at the court of Roman Britain. The future Emperor of Rome had fought no less than thirty battles under Claudius and Plautius, had subdued two mighty nations, and twenty towns, with the Isle of Wight, then called Vectis; for his military exploits he was rewarded with triumphal ornaments, the sacerdotal dignity, and consulship; nor was the renown of the young Titus, his son, who served under him in Britain, much inferior to his own, as numberless inscriptions in Germany, and in this country, are yet remaining to attest.<sup>3</sup> While these distinguished guests were staying in Britain, the court resided at Lud's Town. It was about this date that Arviragus probably commenced the Castle of Windsor for his royal abode, though it is by some ascribed to a later period.<sup>4</sup>

While Vespasian yet tarried at the court of Arviragus and Gwenissa, an event happened which William of Malmesbury records as a remarkable piece of ecclesiastical antiquity. He states, that when St. Philip the Apostle, after the death of our blessed Lord, was in Gaul, promulgating the doctrines of Christianity, he received information that all those horrid superstitions which he had observed in the inhabitants of that country, and had vainly endeavoured, with the utmost labour and difficulty, to overcome, originated from a little island at no great distance from the continent, named Britain. Thither he immediately resolved to extend

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<sup>1</sup> Biog. Brit. Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Harding's Chronicle.

<sup>3</sup> Echard.

<sup>4</sup> Holinshed.

the influence of his precepts, and despatched twelve of his companions and followers, appointing Joseph of Arimathea, who, not long before, had taken his Saviour from the cross, to superintend the sacred embassy.<sup>1</sup> On their arrival, Vespasian interested himself very warmly in their behalf with both the King and Queen, to whom he related a miracle concerning St. Joseph:—

Vespasian praied the kyng,  
The quene also, to be to hym good lorde  
And good ladye, which they graunted in all thing.

\* \* \* \*

All this he told the king and eke the quene,  
And prayde them his supporters to bene.<sup>2</sup>

The royal protection was granted to the strangers, at the request of the Roman general, and they were hospitably entertained by Arviragus,<sup>3</sup> who, to compensate them for their hard and toilsome journey, bestowed on them, for a place of habitation, a small island, which then lay waste and untilled, surrounded by bogs and morasses. To each of the twelve followers of St. Joseph, he appointed there a certain portion of land called a hide, sufficient for one family to live upon, and composing altogether a territory to this day, denominated "The Twelve Hides of Glaston."<sup>4</sup>

This account of the first introduction of Christianity into Britain, singular and romantic as it may seem, is not undeserving of attention, as it is well known that St. Paul preached to the utmost bounds of the west; and we have excellent authority for believing that some of the

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<sup>1</sup> Norman authorities have assigned to Joseph the credit of being an apostle to Britain, and they are supported by the approving opinion of Cardinal Bona and Geoffrey of Monmouth. His pretensions have been defended by Theophilus Evans in his *Drych y prif Oesoed*, and the learned Charles Edwards in his *Hanes y Ffydd*. Leland tells us, that he met with the fragment of Melkinus in the library of Glastonbury; by which he concluded, that Melkinus had written something of the history of Britain, and particularly something concerning the antiquity of Glastonbury, and Joseph of Arimathea. But this story, says Leland, "he sets on foot without any certain author," which makes this learned antiquary dissent from him. And elsewhere, when speaking of the Glastonbury tradition, he observes, "that twelve men are said to have come hither under the conduct of one Joseph; but not Joseph of Arimathea." Bishop Stillingfleet, in his *Origines Britannicæ* (ch. i.), has ably examined all the circumstances connected with this tradition, and has satisfactorily proved the improbability of the mission of Joseph of Arimathea to this country. No mention, too, is made of it by Gildas, Bede, Asserius, Marianus Scotus, or any of the earliest writers.—*Chronicles of the Ancient British Church, anterior to the Saxon Era*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Harding.

<sup>3</sup> It is said that Arviragus was converted by St. Joseph, and received the baptismal rite. [Nennius.] St. Joseph also gave him a shield, white as silver, on which was figured a cross—

Which shelde, by Joseph exhortacion,  
He bore on him in felde of werre alwaye,  
And in his baners and cote armour gaye.

*Harding's Chronicle.*

These arms were used throughout Britain, that each man might know his nation by them.

<sup>4</sup> Collinson's *Somersetshire*; *Biog. Brit.*



Apostles actually preached to the Britons. Theodoret,<sup>1</sup> who asserts this, declares the Britons were converts to St. Paul; and states, that Aristobulus, a bishop ordained by St. Paul, and sent to Britain as a missionary, was martyred A.D. 56. There is, indeed, every reason to believe, that the Christian faith was early promulgated in Britain,<sup>2</sup> and many converts made prior to the defeat of Queen Boadicea. If Vespasian was at all instrumental in establishing it here, it is singular enough, as his son Titus was the destroyer of Jerusalem, and disperser of the Jews throughout the world.

Pomponia Græcina, wife of Plautius, a lady of the court of Gwenissa the Fair, is thought to have been a believer in the Christian faith. This Roman matron was accused of having embraced a strange and foreign superstition, for which crime she was condemned to be tried by her husband. According to the custom of the times, Plautius convened her whole family and relations for this purpose, and in their presence tried her for her life and fame; after which he pronounced her innocent of anything immoral.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A bishop of the fifth century.

<sup>2</sup> Gildas fixes the event in the eighth year of Nero's reign.

<sup>3</sup> Pomponia Græcina, returning to Rome after the death of her husband, perhaps in company with the imprisoned Caractacus and his family, became acquainted with Claudia Rufina, [Gladys Ruffyth, in the British dialect,] daughter of that British prince, and with her is named in the Epistles of St. Paul, as being "saints of the household of Cæsar." She ever after her trial led a retired life; but though this has caused many writers to esteem her of the Christian faith, it did not deter Ovid from addressing to her the fourth Book of his *Metamorphoses*. Her friend Claudia, with her husband and family, mingled in the most brilliant circles of Rome, and are numbered among the most eminent early Christians. [Saxon Martyrology; Archbishop Usher.] They were friends of the poet Martial, who addressed an Epigram to Aulus Rufus Pudens, on the happy occasion of his marriage to Claudia; and another to the young lady herself, on the same subject, as well as some complimentary verses on her beauty, from which the following is an extract: —

"From painted Britons how was Claudia born!  
The fair barbarian how do arts adorn!  
When Roman charms a Grecian soul commend,  
Athens and Rome may for the dame contend."

[Liber IV., Epigram 13.] A book of Epigrams and an elegy on the death of her husband are said to have emanated from the genius of this royal lady, [Baleus; Female Worthies,] who, when her father Caractacus obtained leave to return to Britain, remained behind at the court of Rome, where she was afterwards united to A. R. Pudens, who was a Roman knight and of senatorial rank, as well as a philosopher of the Bononian sect. Linus, who had been honoured by an Epigram of Martial being addressed to him, is named with Pudens and Claudia, by St. Paul in the second Epistle to Timothy. The apostle visited Rome A.D. 62, eleven years after Claudia went thither with her father. It is even asserted that Timothy, the disciple of Paul, was a son of Claudia by Pudens, [Rowland's *Mona Antiqua*,] and that it was owing to the impression made by his preaching that, A.D. 156, [Geof. of M. gives the date of Lucius' death as 156. Nennius gives 167 as the date of his conversion; Bede 156,] King Lucius addressed a letter to Eleutherius, then Pope of Rome, requesting further instructions on the Christian faith. [Rowlands.] In consequence of this application, SS. Fagan and Dervan were sent over to Britain, who, on their arrival, baptized the King and Queen,

Gwenissa the Fair was perhaps not only a patroness of the disciples and missionaries of the new faith, but the mild doctrines they promulgated might have influenced her many acts of generosity and kindness. But the crisis of her destiny, delayed for a time, was at hand. Arviragus, who had increased his power by timely submission until he had become a terror to the neighbouring kings, at last, elevated with pride, again resolved on asserting his power, and, joining a confederacy of chieftains who had assembled at Shrewsbury, amongst whom was Caractacus,<sup>1</sup> was, as has been related, then reconciled to Boadicea.

The news of the final desertion by Arviragus of his fealty and his love, so deeply affected the unfortunate Gwenissa, whose unmerited affection was thus spurned, that, overcome by the extremity of her grief, the hour of maternal anguish was prematurely brought on, and, in the midst of her sufferings, she expired.<sup>2</sup>

The son to whom Gwenissa gave birth, survived, and received the name of Marius, to which was afterwards added that of "Westmer." With the death of Gwenissa ceases all information regarding the earlier British Queens, no record having been preserved of any until we come to those who were adventitiously so. In resuming the line we have to introduce a Roman-born subject.

with their family; whose example was imitated afterwards by their subjects, the inhabitants of Essex, Sussex, and Surrey; [Weever; Stillingfleet;] and thus the doctrines of Jesus became established in the island. Many churches were built by Lucius, particularly those of Winchester and Westminster, which last occupied the spot on which now stands the venerable Abbey of St. Peter. In the subsequent persecution under Dioclesian, it was pulled down, and a temple to Apollo erected from its ruins.

Lucius, the first Christian monarch of Europe, was called "Lever Maur," or "the Great Light;" because he assumed for his badge "the Star of Jacob," which may be seen upon his coins; two of which bear the impression of the Cross, with the royal initials, L. U. C.

The glorious example of Lucius and his queen was followed in Scotland, A. D. 185, when Donald, brother of Ethodius, became king. This prince sent ambassadors to the reigning pontiff, St. Victorinus, requesting him to send over to him some religious men to instruct himself and his subjects in the Christian faith. On their arrival the king, queen, and many of the nobility and people, embraced the faith with great zeal, though idolatry was not extirpated from the country for many years after. [Scott's Hist. of Scotland.]

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Caxton's Chronicle.

## JULIA "DOMINA."

Julia born in Phœnicia — Julia Mæsa, her sister — Beauty and talents of Julia Domina — Her abstruse learning — Her ambitious views — Her arrival at the Imperial City — She is noticed by the Empress — Her success — Her admirers — Severus — The Augury — The Marriage of Julia — Children of Severus — Caracalla and Geta — Eastern Expedition of Severus — Julia becomes Empress — They go to Britain — Advance to Caledonia — Difficulties and Trials on the Campaign — Fulgent lays siege to York — Cruelty of Severus — Superstition of the Emperor — The Court at York — Luxury and pomp — The Emperor's death — Enmity of the Antonines — Return to Rome — Fratricide — Grief of Julia — Severity of Caracalla — Supposed marriage to her Step-son — His Murder — Julia dies — Her Sister's children — Her character as regards Britain.

THIS celebrated woman was not descended from an illustrious family, her father Bassus being merely a priest of the sun at Emessa, a town of Phœnicia; and Julia Soæmias, her mother, had another daughter also, who is known in history as Julia Mæsa, and who became equally distinguished with her sister.

The eldest daughter, whose fate it was to become elevated to the throne of Severus, the Roman Emperor, was by nature gifted with the most rare beauty, so that she charmed all those who approached her; which impression was rendered permanent by the superior talents which accompanied her personal endowments. The mind of Julia, however, was little in accordance with her personal qualities, for malice and dissimulation were its characteristics. The study of philosophy, geometry, and the various sciences, from an early age, was her pursuit, though not commonly the taste of her sex; and this afterwards rendered her capable of enjoying the society of learned men, for she could converse freely with them on any subject; and not only did she think correctly, but her address was easy and graceful, and her manner of writing elegant; so that on her elevation she proved herself competent to manage the most delicate affairs of the cabinet.

Julia, to all the shining qualities calculated to give her influence, added ambition. She was inspired with the presentiment, that hers would be a high and brilliant destiny; and her acquaintance with judicial astrology had led to a knowledge of the prediction that her husband "should one day become Emperor!" The path of glory seemed to open before her: full of hope and expectation, she quitted the obscure town to which she owed her birth, for Rome, the theatre of the world, which she judged a worthy sphere for the display of her charms and her genius. Julia Domina was accompanied by her sister, no less eminently endowed in mind and person than herself.

Scarcely was she arrived at the Imperial City, when she attracted the notice and was taken into the protection of the Empress Anna Faustina.

In a city so devoted to magnificence and display, the lovely sisters could scarcely have failed to be admired. Julia, who was truly Syrian in her character, delighted in sports, shows, and every sort of diversion that could gratify the senses. The high spirits in which she appeared at these festivals, set forth her beauty to the most dazzling advantage, and always ensured some fresh conquests. A crowd of lovers was soon at her feet, and among the number, Septimius Severus, then only a Roman tribune. At the time this bright star of foreign lustre appeared in the horizon, with her combination of attractions, Severus, who had lost his first wife, Martia, was revolving in his mind a second marriage. He, like Julia, had certain presages of his future greatness; some augurs, whom he had consulted respecting a wife who would be likely to forward his ambitious views, being acquainted with the prediction concerning Julia, informed him of it, and gravely recommended the lovely Syrian as a suitable match. The superstitious Severus readily conceived they were destined for each other,<sup>1</sup> while her ambition, and the assurance that her husband should arrive at empire, had more influence on his heart than even her beauty. Already the favorite of the Emperor, he had great interest at court, and made so good an appearance, that Julia did not doubt of his being a man whose preferment was certain. She readily accepted his offer, and thus the first grand step towards the accomplishment of the prophecy was fulfilled. The nuptial ceremony was solemnized in the Temple of Venus, near the Imperial Palace; the Empress Faustina not only honouring the espousals with her presence, but resigning her own apartment on the occasion for the use of the newly married pair.

Severus was by birth an African,<sup>2</sup> and had obtained from the Emperor Marcus Aurelius the offices of quæstor, tribune of the people, and prætor; after which he was proconsul of Africa.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of Julia's marriage, he was the father of three children by his first wife, one of whom was the afterwards unworthily celebrated Caracalla. This prince was born at Lyons, where his father had formerly been stationed as Governor of Gaul, during the war of the usurpers. His mother, Martia,<sup>4</sup> was a native of Britain,<sup>5</sup> and at the time of her marriage, Severus was a tribune under Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. As Caracalla bore the name of Bassianus, many have esteemed him the son of Julia,<sup>6</sup> but that name, perhaps, was given him as a compliment to her, as, soon after Severus quitted Gaul, and while Bassianus was yet a child, Martia died, and Severus entered into his second marriage: the daughters of the first union were both called Septimia, from Severus himself, who

<sup>1</sup> Spartian.

<sup>2</sup> Born A. D. 146, at Leptis or Lepcis.—*Crevier*.

<sup>3</sup> Spartian.

<sup>4</sup> Martia or Mary; Owen's Pedigrees.

<sup>5</sup> *Crevier*; Lewis's Hist. of Brit.; Spartian; Owen's Pedigrees; Lives of the Emperresses.

<sup>6</sup> Wootton, in the History of Rome, says both Bassianus and Geta were children of Julia, the second wife of Severus, whom he married after the death of Martia, his first consort; but this does not seem to be the case, from a careful examination of the many points in the history of these princes.



derived it from his father, Septimius Geta.<sup>1</sup> Two years after her marriage, Julia gave birth to a son, at Rome,<sup>2</sup> named Geta, from his grandfather. The fact of the two brothers being the offspring of different mothers,<sup>3</sup> accounts for many minute points in their after-history. The eldest-born was by the woman who derived her origin from a British family, whose history has not, however, reached us, on account of the Roman contempt for a subdued nation; the younger enjoyed from the cradle, every honor and privilege of a Roman citizen by birth and education. Yet was Severus particularly partial to the children of Martia, and after his marriage with Julia, is said to have even erected statues to the memory of his former wife, at the request of his son Bassianus, who could not be pacified in any other way, under the contempt shown for his mother, whose alliance was considered ignoble.<sup>4</sup> This occasioned a preference among the Romans for the son of Julia, which, added to the misfortune of his losing his mother, Martia, at so tender an age, and being committed to the care of a jealous stepmother, were unfavourable circumstances, in themselves sufficient to account for the many bad features displayed in the character of Bassianus "Caracalla"<sup>5</sup> during the latter years of his life. In childhood especially tender-hearted, the earnest entreaty of this young Gaul had obtained from his father, on the reduction of Byzantium, a mitigation of the punishment to which that city and Antioch had been condemned,<sup>6</sup> which tender emotions of affection and sympathy were entirely extinguished before the young prince had arrived at the imperial power.

The causes which led to the expedition of Severus into the East, and taking of the cities of Byzantium and Antioch, being immediately connected with his elevation to the throne of the Cæsars, require to be noticed here. At the time when Julian received the imperial power, the vast armies of Rome were commanded by three several leaders, each possessed of wisdom and experience, yet differing in character, and each alike in the one point of anxiety to succeed to the throne of Pertinax: they had an equality of force, three legions being at the disposal of each; but the army generally decided, in such cases as theirs, the fortune of the day; and of the three competitors for power—Pescennius Niger in Syria, Clodius Albinus in Britain, and Septimius Severus in Illyricum,

<sup>1</sup> Crevier.

<sup>2</sup> Lives of Empresses.

<sup>3</sup> Echard.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis; Lives of the Empresses.

<sup>5</sup> Both before and after his father's death, Bassianus appeared often in the dress peculiar to the Gauls, from which he derived the name by which he is chiefly known in history—Caracalla. The cassock of this name, which Caracalla rendered fashionable in Rome, was originally Gaulish; it was a long garment reaching down to the ancles, [Echard,] and resembled the habit of a modern monk, being sometimes worn with, and sometimes without, a hood or cowl. [Aurelius Victor Tenacius de Re Vestitaria Rom., Hoffman. Lexic. Univ.] By some the name of Caracalla, given on this account, is regarded as a reproach thrown on the prince's origin. The love of dress of Caracalla is seen also by his appearing in a dress peculiar to the Alemanni whom he had conquered, and wearing false hair of the same colour as theirs. [Dio Aurelius Victor.]

<sup>6</sup> Crevier.

the latter was destined to succeed on this occasion. The empire had long been the goal of his ambition, and from the time of his marriage till his elevation to power, Severus is said to have been always guided by the counsels of Julia, to which he was principally indebted for that high reputation with the soldiery which, in the end, induced them to proclaim him Emperor. He lost no time in undertaking an expedition into the east against Niger, whom he succeeded in making his prisoner. Cruelty was a prominent feature in the actions of Severus throughout his career of triumphs; he put his enemy to death, and the same fate was afterwards shared by his wife and children: most of the senators, his adherents, lost their lives, and the remainder were banished. Those cities which befriended Niger, were also severely punished; of which number were Byzantium and Antioch, in whose behalf Caracalla interfered; while the Empress, who on this, as on every other occasion, had accompanied her husband, interposed in favour of her native city, Emessa, and obtained its pardon from the Emperor.

It would cause too long a digression to relate all the circumstances of the arrival of Severus at imperial power. Suffice it to record, that his entrance into Rome was one of the most triumphant of those times of pomp and exhibition.

The vanity and pride of Julia were fully satisfied with the honours heaped on both her husband and herself. Crowns of flowers and of laurel were showered upon them as they passed by the shouting citizens: the senators, in state attire, met them at the gates with greeting; fires, made of perfumed wood, were lighted in every street: on Julia was conferred the title of August, given always to the wives of their Emperors,<sup>1</sup> besides those of Mother of the Republic and of the Armies, and several other complimentary titles, expressly invented for this occasion. She thus saw fulfilled to the letter the prediction of her future grandeur, on which she had relied. Her pride naturally rose with her prosperity; she insisted on the full privileges of her newly acquired dignity, and intoxicated with her position, treated the greatest persons in the empire with haughtiness and contempt.

Severus meantime was anxious to secure the fortunes of his children by Martia. He accordingly gave one daughter to Aëtius, whom he raised to the consular rank, and bestowed the other on Probus, who already was a consul, and who was offered, on this occasion, the government of the city of Rome, which, however, he was politic enough to refuse,<sup>2</sup> and hoping to ingratiate himself with the new Emperor, gave as his reason, that the honour of being his son-in-law was, in his opinion, infinitely greater than that employment.

Severus, desirous to determine who should be his heir, was so anxious, that the subject invaded his rest, and in a dream he learnt that his successor was to be named Antoninus. Regarding this as an infallible prediction, he brought his favorite son, Bassianus, into the camp, and gave him the name of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, in presence of all the legions.<sup>3</sup> This son actually did reign after him, as history attests;<sup>4</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Selden's Titles of Honour.

<sup>2</sup> Lives of the Emperresses.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

it is a circumstance which Spartian remarks as very singular, that Severus should have omitted, when he wrote the history of his own life, any mention of his first wife, this prince's mother, to whose memory the statues were raised at Caracalla's request.

In order to withdraw his sons, and still more, perhaps, his wife, from the pleasures of Rome, to which she was attached beyond all bounds, Severus availed himself of the excuse afforded by an irruption from North Britain into the territories in the south of the island which were under the Roman empire, to undertake an expedition to Britain.<sup>1</sup> He was accompanied by Julia, his two sons, and two Roman legions.<sup>2</sup> On his arrival, he encountered the rebel Britons in an engagement, when some were reduced to submission, and the rest fled into Caledonia, whither they were pursued by the warlike Emperor.<sup>3</sup>

At the time Severus undertook this expedition, he was advanced in years, and so broken with infirmities, that he had to be carried in a litter; yet, impelled by his indomitable spirit, he proceeded through woods and morasses to the farthest parts of Caledonia. He surmounted all the fatigues of the march, and many fierce encounters which took place between the Roman and Pictish forces. Julia was with her husband throughout the whole of this trying campaign.

One of the foes of Severus in Britain was Fulgent, a relative of Martia, mother of Caracalla. In this campaign with the Scots he fought against the Romans with great bravery, having procured some Picts to assist him in the war, and many inhabitants of the islands adjacent to Britain, as well as the Britons themselves. It is said that he laid siege to York, which was relieved by Severus marching to its aid, and in the contest which followed, Fulgent received a mortal wound. That Severus fell has also been asserted, but this is untrue, as he was prevented by age and infirmities from personally engaging in the contest.

During this warfare the armour of the northern Britons and Caledonians consisted of a small shield and a spear; they wore also a sword depending from their naked bodies, which were painted over with the figures of animals.<sup>4</sup> The cruelty of Severus was in this campaign as conspicuous as ever: a speech of his is on record, of which the following quaint lines are a translation:<sup>5</sup> he commands an indiscriminate slaughter of his enemies:

“Let none escape your bloody rage —  
With terror let all die;  
Spare not the mother, nor the babe  
Which in her womb doth lie.”

From this we discover that women mingled with the strife, even women about to become mothers, and who were fiercely sentenced to be slaughtered by the unfeeling Emperor.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Warrington.

<sup>2</sup> Geoff. of Monmouth.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Guthrie.

<sup>5</sup> It is translated from the Greek by Mr. Leigh, in his “Select and Choice Observations of the Roman Emperors.”

<sup>6</sup> Fifty thousand Romans perished in the expedition of Severus into Scotland, though no battle was fought, through ambuscades of the enemy and fatigue in

On entering York after his success against Fulgent and the Caledonians, a circumstance occurred confirmatory of the superstitious character of Severus. A Temple of Bellona stood at that time in Eboracum, and in front of it a small column, called the "martial pillar," whence a spear was thrown when war was declared against an enemy.<sup>1</sup> Severus, on entering the city, proceeded towards that spot with the intention of offering a sacrifice, but on his way thither was met by a Moor wearing a cypress garland about his head,—a circumstance considered so unlucky, that the Emperor ordered him to begone out of his sight: when the man, who was of the class of soothsayers, and, being an African, respected by Severus, who was himself of that quarter of the world, saluted him with these words: "Totum fuisti, totum vicisti, jam Deus esto victor,"<sup>2</sup> and offered to conduct him on to the temple. This was thought by the Emperor to foretell his death; and another prognostic was added when he quitted the temple after the sacrifice had been offered, for some of the black beasts appointed to have been slain are said to have followed the Emperor to the palace. All the Romans, and more especially Severus, regarded this last as one of the worst of omens, and a warning of the approach of death.<sup>3</sup>

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cutting down woods, building bridges, and drying marshy grounds. Julia must have witnessed much during this season. Severus is said to have observed with great accuracy the lengths of the days and nights of the summer and winter while in Caledonia, which could not have been done without a stay of at least six months. He pursued his course, laying waste by fire and sword, in spite of his gout and all difficulties, till peace was brought about by a concession of the disputed territory, and the Caledonians delivering up their arms. On this occasion it was that Caracalla had sought to murder his father in the sight of the whole Roman and British army. The Emperor, in presence of his soldiers, was in the act of concluding a treaty, and the Britons were presenting their arms in token of submission, when Caracalla, who stood behind, suddenly drew his sword, and would have killed his father. Severus, turning at that moment, beheld the sword raised to destroy him: without betraying any surprise, or uttering a single word, he pursued the business in hand, received the arms of the Britons, and signed the treaty. When he had returned to his tent, he sent for his son; and Papinian, captain of the guard, and Castor, his chief chamberlain, being present, reproached Caracalla for his wickedness. Then offering a drawn sword to him, he said, "If your ambition to reign alone prompts you to imbue your hands in the blood of your father, execute your impious purpose rather in this place than in the sight of the whole world and in the presence both of our friends and enemies. If you are not yet abandoned to such a degree as to murder your father with your own hand, order Papinian to commit the parricide: you are emperor, he must obey you!" This speech neither affected Caracalla at the time, nor rendered his conduct more dutiful for the future.

<sup>1</sup> It is supposed that the site of this building was in or near the street called St. Saviour-gate, as in digging the foundation of some houses on the north side of it, many years ago, large quantities of the horns of several kinds of beasts were discovered, and the probability is increased when we consider its vicinity to the Imperial Palace. [Allen's Hist. of York.]

<sup>2</sup> Spartan. Leigh's Choice Observations.

<sup>3</sup> The structure which was called the Prætorian Palace is supposed to have occupied the whole space of ground extending from Christ Church, through all the houses and gardens on the east side of Goodramgate and St. Andrew's Gate, through the Bedern, to Aldwark. The royal baths in all probability occupied a



During the residence of Severus in Britain, with the exception of the period occupied in the Caledonian war, he constantly held his court at York. It was a military colony, governed by both military and municipal laws. The Emperors sat at times in person in the Prætorium, in the chief tribunal, to give laws to the whole empire; and the rescript of Severus and Antonine, *de rei vindicatione*, is dated from this ancient city;<sup>1</sup> York or Eboracum, may therefore be regarded as a miniature picture of Rome, and as possessing a just claim to the titles with which it has been dignified by Alcuin, of Britannia Orbis, Roma altera, Pallatium Curiae, and Prætorium Caesaris. In its form it resembled ancient Rome, for in a plan of the city left by Fabius, Rome is represented in the form of a bow, of which the Tiber was the string: and "the Ouse has not inaptly been called the bowstring of York." Both these rivers run directly through the cities which they water, and have contributed to their ancient splendour and ultimate consequence.<sup>2</sup>

The city, in the reign of Severus, was arrived at the height of its grandeur and consequence. "The prodigious concourse of tributary kings, foreign ambassadors, and other persons of distinction, who crowded the court of the sovereigns of the world at this period, when the Roman empire was in the zenith of its power, in addition to the emperor's own magnificence, his numerous retinue, the noblemen of Rome, or the officers of the army, all which would necessarily attend him, must have exalted Eboracum nearly to the summit of sublunary grandeur."

Julia "Domina," the chosen partner of Severus, the inseparable companion of his progresses east or west, even to the extreme bounds of the north, held within the walls of the Prætorian Palace her own imperial state. With her was her sister Julia Mæsa, who shared her brilliant fortunes, and never quitted her up to the latest period of her existence.<sup>3</sup>

For a space of time not less than two years, while the court was held in Britain, the island natives beheld before their eyes a spectacle novel and imposing,—grandeur and luxury, in all their varied forms of dress and equipage. No wonder that the consequence was a final loss of their own simple tastes and unaspiring habits. As early as the time of Agricola, the Roman fashions were imitated by the Britons, and especially their dress, proud buildings, baths, and elegant banquets.<sup>4</sup> A Roman British female is exhibited in Smith's costumes, taken from the reverse

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considerable part of this extent, [Drake; Allen,] for the Romans were peculiarly partial to their hot and cold baths.

<sup>1</sup> Universal History.

<sup>2</sup> Allen.

<sup>3</sup> At a later epoch of our history, this Roman palace became the residence of the Saxon and Danish kings of Northumberland, and then of the earls of the district, until the reign of Edward the Confessor. The palace, when in possession of Tosti, Earl of Northumberland, brother of Editha, Edward's queen, was plundered and burnt by the enraged populace. It fell afterwards into the hands of the crown; but as the English kings did not reside there, the building became neglected. More recently still "the Guildhall," as the palace of Severus had been named in more modern times, was appropriated to the Dukes of York.—*Allen's York.*

<sup>4</sup> Milton.

of a coin of Carausius. She is habited in the *gun* and *pais*, just like the Welch peasantry of the present time; except that the former, instead of opening before and wrapping over, appears a copy of the Roman tunic. All the Brito-Roman coins and bassi-relievi agree in exhibiting the tunic as worn over the *pais*, with sleeves, as at the present day in Wales, descending only down to the elbows.

While the Romans in Britain progressed in the vast undertakings assigned to them by Severus, the Emperor himself remained at York, suffering from severe illness, from which he never recovered. Caracalla, who had returned from his expedition against the Caledonians, not content with so near a view of the imperial diadem as was presented by the fast-ebbing current of his parent's existence, endeavoured to hasten his last moments by exciting a mutiny among the Roman troops, whom he caused to proclaim himself Emperor. Severus, hearing of what had passed, caused the principal offenders to be brought into his presence, who prostrated themselves before him, and supplicated forgiveness.

The nobles of Severus wondering how he could govern so vast an empire in his feeble and diseased state, he remarked that "he ruled with his brain, not with his *feet*," alluding to the gout from which he was then suffering. This had long been a trial to the Emperor, for on returning the second time from the East to Rome, he declined the proffered honour of a triumph, because the gout prevented his riding in the state chariot used on such occasions. When in Caledonia, he was carried in a litter.

When he felt himself dying, he caused his urn to be brought, and having taken it into his hand, said: "Thou shalt contain him whom the world could not." Some say that Julia and her son Geta were staying in London<sup>1</sup> when Severus died; but that they were present at the last fatal scene, appears from the address that Severus is said to have made to his sons prior to his death: "Agree among yourselves; enrich the soldiers; condemn all others."

This Emperor, who was indebted for his elevation to the legions, entertained a particular regard for the soldiery, and, out of gratitude, had conferred many benefits on them,—among which was an indulgence which injured the discipline of the army. The soldiers had hitherto been required to live in a state of celibacy, but Claudius permitted to them the rights and privileges which attached to the married state.<sup>2</sup> Severus went further, and gave them leave to marry. Before his time the Roman camp had no place of accommodation for women. Might not Severus have acted in this, as in many other instances, from the influence of his Empress, the attendant of his numerous campaigns, and partaker of his cares and dangers?

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor's infirmities preventing his own progression through the British states, Julia's visit to the south was probably for the purpose of transacting business, and to join the court of Geta, held at London during his father's visit to Caledonia; for the south of Britain was left under his control, — a politic arrangement of Severus, to prevent differences between the brothers. Of Geta, who was an extravagant admirer of horses, we are told an equestrian statue was found near Bath. — *Collinson*.

<sup>2</sup> Murphy's Tacitus. See notes.

The Emperor plainly foresaw the contention that would arise between his sons after his death respecting the empire. After addressing them, as before related, he bade them read in Sallust the dying speech of Micipsa to his children, in which they would find this expression: "By concord, small possessions increase; by discord, great ones are wasted." After this parental exhortation, he uttered the following words: "I received the Republic everywhere troubled; I leave it at peace *even among the Britons*; bequeathing to my Antonines,<sup>1</sup> old and lame as I am, an empire which will prove firm, if they be good,—but weak, should they turn out evil."<sup>2</sup>

Such were the last moments of Severus, who died in the Imperial Palace at Eboracum, whose walls not long after were destined to witness the dissolution of another Roman Emperor, Constantius Chlorus, a very different character from its present inmate. The remains of the deceased Emperor were buried in a spot about two miles and a half distant from the city,<sup>3</sup> called, from the circumstance, Severs-hill, to the present day. Of the three singular hills, called Severus'-hills, the centre one is the smallest, and is about twenty-seven yards above the level of the surrounding country; the others are about thirty-five yards in height.<sup>4</sup>

A small arch yet exists in Rome to the memory of Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Julia.

Severus had been raised to the empire A. D. 195, and died A. D. 212, after a seventeen years' reign, aged 66. During the last two years his sons had shared in his sovereignty, as Antonines. He is said to have been inexorable to his enemies, but kind to his friends, and rough and untractable in his manners, though exact in his distribution of justice. In his time food was provided to the Roman people, even without asking, whenever it was needed, and the soldiers loved him for his excessive liberality, and for permitting them to have their wives in their quarters. The greatest pleasure of the Emperor was to do good to all around him, and Galen, the prince of physicians, who lived in his time, and attained the age of seventy, declares that Severus kept constantly by him a great store of treacle, and other expensive remedies, to relieve such as wanted them, by which means he saved the lives of many persons. Of this number was his Greek secretary, Antipater, son of Piso, to whom Galen dedicated his treatise on treacle, and who wrote the history of the reign of his imperial master, Severus. Arria, also a lady of distinction, was saved by this remedy; she was much esteemed by Severus, because she applied herself to the study of philosophy and the reading of Plato. Severus<sup>5</sup> may be ranked among the *literati* of his own era, for he wrote

<sup>1</sup> The title accorded the two young Cæsars, his sons.

<sup>2</sup> Spartian.

<sup>3</sup> In the township of Holdgate and parish of Acomb. — *Allen*.

<sup>4</sup> Leigh, Rudolphus, Camden, and Drake.

<sup>5</sup> Coins of Severus and of Julia have been dug up at Aldborough in Yorkshire, and other parts of Britain. A valuable deposit of Roman coins was dug up near Morton in Yorkshire, consisting of a very large quantity of denarii in excellent preservation, chiefly coins of Severus, Julia, Caracalla, and Geta. They were contained in the remains of a brass chest, supposed to have belonged to a Roman legion, and to have been deposited, on some sudden alarm, in the spot which it

the history of his own life; while Julia, who successfully applied herself to letters and philosophy, patronized every art, and was the friend of every man of genius; amongst other proofs of this, it was at her request that Philostratus undertook his life of Apollonius Tyanæus.

According to Gibbon, the nurse and preceptor of Caracalla were both Christians. Origen, also, who died in 253, says in his 6th Homily, "The power of our Saviour's kingdom reached as far as Britain, which seemed to lie in another division of the world." Yet Severus is himself said to have been a persecutor of the Christians. It was agreed by the two brothers, Caracalla and Geta, that they should return to Rome<sup>1</sup> with the Empress-Mother. They set out, bearing with them the ashes of Severus in a golden urn, the same which had been brought to the dying Emperor. On their way so many contentions arose from mutual jealousy, that it was feared they would destroy one another; and on one occasion Geta would have fallen a sacrifice to the poison prepared for him by Caracalla, but for the fidelity of his servants.<sup>2</sup> Julia, as though she had been mother to both, endeavoured by every possible means to reconcile them, but without success; their animosity increased to such a degree that they even ate and lodged separately, and each stood upon his guard against the other. On their arrival in Rome, they immediately divided the imperial palace between them, as they could not agree to live together. "No communication was allowed between their apartments, the doors and passages were diligently fortified, and guards posted and relieved with the same strictness as in a besieged place." The two Emperors, one of whom was but twenty-three, and the other a year younger, met only in public, and then in the presence of their afflicted mother.

Every posthumous honour was awarded to the memory of Severus, and on the arrival of the brothers at Rome the first act of Caracalla and Geta

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had quietly occupied afterwards during a period of almost sixteen centuries.—*Allen's York.*

A thick coin in middle brass, of Julia, is said to have borne on the obverse a fine head of the Empress, with the legend, "Julia Domna Pia Felix Augusta." The reverse exhibited a full length figure of Venus; the legend merely, "Felicitas Publica," with the usual S. C. (meaning by order of the Senate) inscribed on the field.—*Journal of Science.*

A considerable quantity of clay moulds, or matrices, for the coining of Roman money, were turned up some time since at Lingwell Yatt, near Wakefield. Several crucibles for melting the metal were also found at the same time, and in some of the moulds there were coins yet remaining. A number of clay moulds for casting coins were also discovered in the parish of Eddington, Somersetshire, having the impressions of Severus and Caracalla, with their Empresses, Julia and Plautilla. Some of these moulds are lodged in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.—*Collinson.*

<sup>1</sup> According to some authorities, Caracalla, on his father's death, proceeded direct to London, where the Empress and Geta were staying, with the hope of prosecuting his claims on the empire in that quarter: for it too soon became apparent that only one of the brothers could reign, and that the other must fall. The Romans would have preferred Geta for their Emperor, for he was, both by his father and mother, a Roman; but the Britons rejected him, desiring Bassianus "Caracalla," their own countryman by the mother's side, to be advanced to the supreme dignity.

<sup>2</sup> Wootton.



was to perform the Emperor's Apotheosis or Deification, with the usual ceremonies. The whole city assumed the garb of mourning. Next, an image was made of wax, to represent exactly the deceased Emperor. This was laid on a stately ivory bed, magnificently adorned with cloth of gold, and placed at the entrance of the palace. On the left hand were seated the whole body of the senators in black, on the right the ladies of the highest quality in plain white habits, without jewels or other ornaments. This lasted for seven days, during which time the physicians resorted to the image as though it had been a real patient, still signifying that they had less and less hopes of the Emperor's life; at which words the mourners always gave a groan. At last, when they had declared his death, the noblest and youngest of the senators carried the bed upon their shoulders through the *Via Sacra* to the Old Forum, on each side of which were erected two large scaffolds, one filled with young boys, and the other with young maidens, all children of the highest quality, who sang solemn and mournful hymns and songs in honour of the dead. After these were ended, the senators and knights again took up the bed and carried it out of the city into the *Campus Martius*, where a beautiful pyramid of wood, with several stones; had been erected. The first story was square, being a sort of chamber filled with various sorts of combustible matter, and richly adorned on the outside with cloth of gold, ivory statues, and fine pictures; the second of a similar character, but smaller size, had the four sides open; the third was still less; after which was a fourth, and, indeed, many other successive stories, each decreasing in proportion, till the last ended in a point. The bed and statue were placed in the second story, in presence of noblemen and gentry of every nation, who desired to do honour to the deceased. Then the Roman knights rode on horseback round the pile in a certain order, to the sound of warlike instruments; afterwards persons in chariots, in purple robes, who represented the most celebrated Roman commanders and emperors; after this Caracalla and Geta, the successors of Severus, fired the pile with torches, and consuls, senators, and knights followed their example. It was wrapped instantly in flames, and from the top an eagle was let fly, which was out of sight in an instant, amid the shouts of the spectators, who, believing the bird carried the Emperor's soul to heaven, from that time forward paid him the same homage they rendered to the immortal gods.

The disunion which existed between the brothers did not diminish, and they continually had recourse to the Empress, who officiated as mediatrix. A negotiation was set on foot respecting a division of the empire, but this plan, first proposed by Geta, was broken by Julia, who desired to keep her sons together, and foresaw the step would lead to the ruin of the state. On this occasion she threw herself at their feet, begging that they would divide her too between them. She had omitted no opportunity before of reconciling her sons, and now by her prayers and tears established an appearance at least of concord between them. Accordingly, medals were stamped with the images of the two brothers joining hands, and surrounded by the motto "Happy Concord."

Caracalla, who ever listened with respect and apparent deference to the arguments of the Empress, agreed to abide by her decision, and had

arranged to meet his long-divided brother in her apartments, for the purpose of a lasting reconciliation. The heart of Julia beat with joy at the prospect of witnessing so tender a reunion, and the meeting so earnestly desired actually took place in her presence; it was then that, in the midst of a conversation which had commenced among the reunited members of the divided family, some centurions who had been concealed in the apartment, rushed suddenly with drawn swords upon the young and helpless Geta. Vainly did Julia cast her maternal arms around her child to shield him from death. In the dreadful struggle she received a wound in the hand from his assassins, and beheld on one side the horrid spectacle of Caracalla animating and assisting the murderers, upon the other, Geta falling dead at her feet, her own person being covered with his blood.

The fratricide flew to the Prætorian camp, where he fell prostrate before the statues of the tutelary deities of the camps. Supported by the army he next hurried to the Senate, and prevailed on that obsequious assembly to declare in his favour. His brother's funeral over, Caracalla returned to the palace, where he found the Empress-Mother surrounded by her women, bewailing in the most moving manner the death of her son. His first impulse was to put them all to death, but passion yielded to pity, and he showed great kindness to Julia, to whom he even ordered that the same honours should be paid as were rendered to himself. The heart-breaking scene might have moved one even more stern than that stony-breasted Emperor; and indeed, what were all the world's honour's to Julia at that moment—a widowed wife, deploring the loss of an only and dearly-beloved son! But the silent reproach of those who surrounded the Empress, revived the fury of the murderer, and he commanded them to disperse, on pain of death; while, to prove that he was in earnest, he ordered that one of the terrified mourners should be led away to instant execution. Fadilla, the unfortunate victim of his anger, was daughter of Marcus Aurelius, and sister of Commodus, both Emperors; she herself had rendered state-services, by pleading the cause of the people, and preserving the life of a Roman emperor, besides having quelled an insurrection. All this was overlooked by Caracalla, who only beheld the tears shed in the first moment of grief for the death of the young and blooming Geta—a tribute due to the bereaved Empress. This severity had the effect expected, and silenced all remonstrances from the women. Fadilla, the personal friend and confidante of Julia, was the first of a series of victims, termed "the friends of Geta." It is said that no less than 2000 persons of both sexes suffered on this occasion, amongst whom was Papinian, the most eminent lawyer in Rome, the particular friend both of Severus and Julia; his crime was having declined composing a defence for the Emperor, for he observed "It is easier to commit fratricide than to justify it!" Rome was filled with mourning, and the loss of Severus was regarded as a public calamity. Even before he quitted Britain, the sanguinary Caracalla had ordered the death of his wife Plautina. For the sake of the city, for the sake even of Caracalla himself, Julia suppressed her own sufferings; she saw the necessity of resuming her influence over the government, which Caracalla allowed; and during the whole of his reign, she administered the chief affairs of the State, "with a jus-

tice that supported his authority, and with a moderation that sometimes corrected his wild extravagances." On one occasion she remarked to the Emperor how much he exhausted the people by his rapacity; that they were no longer able to pay their accustomed taxes: Caracalla's reply was characteristic of himself, "I shall have whatever money I want as long as I can command a sword."

Advanced in life, Julia still possessed the attractions of beauty, a lively imagination, a firmness of mind, and strength of judgment seldom bestowed on her sex. Spartan, and some other authors, have related that Julia consented to become the wife of Caracalla, and that their nuptials were publicly celebrated, which, if true, would have allied her to the murderer of her only son; but others consider Caracalla to have been only her step-son, which is under every point of her history apparent.<sup>1</sup> The tale seems to have originated in a scandal of the Alexandrians, who called her Jocasta because she lived at court after the death of Geta. Dion plainly intimates that she durst not do otherwise, since any concern for the son she had lost might have cost her her life; and he relates that she secretly mourned over the extravagances of Caracalla, passing the greater portion of her time, during the latter years of her life, in the society of learned men. She would hardly have acted thus, if guilty of such a crime. Julia did indeed accompany the Emperor to the East, but they were not residing at the same spot when he was murdered.

Maternianus<sup>2</sup> wrote to Caracalla, then at Edessa, informing him that he had heard Macrinus repeat a prediction that himself was to arrive at the imperial power. Julia was at time staying at Antioch, and the Emperor, who was at Edessa, had given her instructions in his absence to read all his dispatches. Fully empowered to do so, when the letter of Maternianus fell into Julia's hands, she read it, and transmitted it to Caracalla; but before it reached him, Macrinus, who attended him there, had received private information of the circumstance direct from Rome.<sup>3</sup> Caracalla was driving a chariot at the public shows, when a packet was handed to him containing the letter of Maternianus, and passing them to Macrinus to read, the future Emperor found it among the rest.

The particulars of Caracalla's murder need not be dwelt on here; the assassin had been hired by some military conspirators, and at the end of three days Macrinus received from the army the predicted dignity of Emperor. By his orders, Caracalla's body was burnt, and the ashes conveyed to Antioch to Julia, who was overwhelmed with her new affliction. Some say she mourned but the loss of that power which she so much loved, and to which she had sacrificed her feelings. She had, to this advanced age, retained the title of Augusta, and a great part of the business of the government passed through her hands: Macrinus gave her to understand that she was to retain the dignity of Augusta, with its

<sup>1</sup> Had this scandal of Julia, however, been true, both Herodian and Dion Cassius were ready enough to admit anything against Caracalla, and they do not even mention it.

<sup>2</sup> Captain of the Guards at Rome.

<sup>3</sup> By a courier from Ulpian Julianus, his particular friend.



rank, and to have the honour of continuing guards for her person. On this she resolved no longer to devote her thoughts to death, but to continue to live according to her former dignity. Macrinus soon, however, discovered a cabal with the soldiers, in which she was engaged; so that he hastily ordered her to withdraw from Antioch. This sudden change decided her as to what course she would adopt, and abstaining from food, she died, it is said, either of inanition or poison, unable to live as a subject,<sup>1</sup> after a life passed in the enjoyment of supreme power. This event took place A. D. 217, fifteen years after the death of Severus.

The vicissitudes of the life of Julia did not, till the last, affect her spirit or disarm her fortitude. A gifted woman, elevated from a humble station to the highest pinnacle of earthly splendour, her happiness is problematical. The dreadful death of her only son, and the extravagant follies of Caracalla, must have corroded at her heart, amidst all the stately honours and dignity she so much coveted. During the latter period of her existence, her chief enjoyment was that fertile one afforded by the society of the learned, whom to the very last she fostered and protected. If her youth was charged with folly, the qualities she displayed during her after-life may atone for her errors, looking upon her as a public character. She was always disposed to intercede with Severus, and avert his severity, and from her Caracalla received wise counsels. Literature and science followed her footsteps, or sprung up afresh from the decline into which they had fallen. To her, perhaps, were the children of her sister Julia Mæsa, who was with her when she died, indebted for the advice which led them on to their future greatness.<sup>2</sup> The failings of Julia have been severely visited by historians. Such failings in exalted persons may remind us of the imperfection of all here below. Had Julia's career been less brilliant, less exposed to temptation, she had perhaps exhibited fewer of those imperfections, which the higher the object is placed, become the more manifest.

In her character as a British sovereign, her acts appear to advantage, as she certainly helped to refine the manners of the rude people amongst whom she sojourned.

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<sup>1</sup> Echard.

<sup>2</sup> Julia Mæsa, after the death of the Empress, her sister, was ordered to quit the country. During the twenty years she had spent at the imperial court, she had acquired an immense fortune, and contracted splendid alliances. She retired to her native city, Emessa, taking her wealth with her, and accompanied by her two daughters and their sons,—for each was a widow, and had an only child. Bassianus, a son of one of these daughters, became priest of the sun at Emessa; and the troops perceiving his strong resemblance to their favorite Caracalla, and, moreover, bribed by his mother, at the instigation of Julia Mæsa, declared him Emperor. Perhaps the anticipation of Julia Domina's connivance at some such enterprising scheme had caused the severity shown to her by Macrinus. Bassianus, afterwards well known as Heliogabalus, proved so unworthy, that the army soon repented of their choice, and, attracted by the virtues of his cousin Alexander, son of the other daughter of Julia Mæsa, they raised him to the imperial power; in which capacity, after the murder of Heliogabalus, being guided by his mother's excellent counsels, he displayed, during thirteen years, remarkable wisdom and prudence. His death took place A. D. 235.



# VICTORIA, VITURGIA, AND HUNILA,

## EMPRESSES OF THE WEST.

Zenobia and Victoria—Influence of both—Character of Victorinus—His Murder, and that of his Son—Marius chosen by the Empress—His history and fate—Posthumus succeeds—Ælianus—Tetricus appointed by Victoria—Constantius Chlorus in Britain—Victoria's sudden death by the treachery of Tetricus—Aurelian's Roman triumph—Viturgia and Proculus—Bonosus the Pedagogue—His rise—Aurelian bestows Hunila upon him—He proclaims himself Emperor of Britain, Gaul and Spain—His death—Probus settles a pension on Hunila.

THE vast Empire of Rome, at the period of the accession of the Emperor Aurelian, A.D. 270, was divided between two rivals in talent, in fame, and at the last, in misfortune,—Zenobia, Empress of the Eastern division of the Roman territory, and Victoria, the not less deservedly celebrated Empress of the West.<sup>1</sup> It is not without pleasure, that in so distant a period we hail the name which our present beloved Sovereign has engraven on each true British heart,—a name destined to be illustrious; for the Empress Queen of Gaul, Spain and Britain, occupied a position among the most distinguished of her times, and by her character and actions illuminated the darkness of the Western hemisphere. “Aurelia Victoria Augusta” possessed such vast power, that she raised as many as six candidates to the imperial dignity, in defiance of the Roman arms, while to the last fatal scene of her existence she maintained the supreme authority over those she had exalted, and over the people whom she had appointed them to rule.

The “Heroine of the West,” as Victoria has been designated, was not of British birth, though Britain was included under the dominions over which she held control; she was a native of Gaul, and by her adroitness succeeded in persuading<sup>2</sup> Posthumus, on his elevation to the empire, to receive her son, Marcus Victorinus, for his colleague in power. The assumption of the purple by Posthumus is placed in the year 265, when he was proclaimed throughout Gaul, Spain, and Britain; so highly was he esteemed by Valerian, that when appointed to the government of Gaul, that Emperor wrote to the people in these terms of commendation: “He is one whom I esteem above the rest, and think the most worthy of all to represent the Prince.” Among the list of thirty tyrants who aspired to the imperial power during the reigns of Gallien and Probus, we accordingly find those of Victoria, Victorinus, and Posthumus.

The enterprising Victoria was little inferior in merit to her celebrated contemporary, Zenobia; she possessed great courage and ambition, and no sooner had she accomplished her project of securing the empire for

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon.

her son, than her superior qualities began to unfold themselves. It was Victoria who really governed the state, though business was transacted in the name of her son and his colleague; so extraordinary a power had she over the minds of the soldiery, that she could rely on their executing her every wish. Trebellius Pollio, in his account of the "Usurpers," has introduced Victoria to cast contempt on Gallien, by a contrast between himself and the boldness of the women of his time. Victorinus was generally governed by his mother's politic counsels, who, for her valour and masculine courage, was styled "Mother of Armies." By her assistance he opposed Lollianus, whom he defeated and slew in a sharp battle, remaining sole master of Gaul, together with his mother, who was associated with him under the title of Augusta.<sup>1</sup> The influence exercised by the Empress in this situation is compared, by a modern writer,<sup>2</sup> to that possessed by Mammæa in an earlier period of the Roman history, and considered to have been "at least as constitutional."

Cologne was the seat of the Imperial Government of the West, and Victoria, who resided in that city, exercised, in her son's name, all the functions of royalty, while he devoted himself to a life of pleasure, although he is said to have been by nature endowed with every quality requisite to form a hero; and to have equalled Trajan in bravery, Antoninus in clemency, Nerva in gravity, Vespasian in managing the public money, and Pertinax and Severus in his care of the military discipline. The author,<sup>3</sup> who considered "no one ought to be preferred to Victorinus," somewhat contradicts his commendation, when he adds, that his besetting vices "drowned all his good qualities, and cast such a blemish upon his reputation, that no one dares to record the virtues of a man whom all own to have deserved the doom which, in the end, overtook him."<sup>4</sup> This doom could not be averted by all the virtues of his mother.

On his first elevation to power, Victorinus had controlled his evil passions; but afterwards, imagining his high rank raised him above control, disregarding fear or censure, he threw off the restraint, and lost the affections of his soldiers by his immoral conduct towards their wives.<sup>5</sup> The plot formed in consequence against the life of Victorinus succeeded so suddenly, as scarcely to leave him time to name his son Victorinus Augustus as his successor. This step, in the event of any emergency, had been advised by Victoria, who appears to have foreseen the fate of her son. The heavy wound her mother's heart received in his loss, did not deprive her of her presence of mind. She instantly caused her grandson to be proclaimed Emperor, and assumed an unlimited power in his name. The honours thus secured proved, however, fatal to the child; for the murderers of his father, in fear of their personal safety under the dominion of Victoria, succeeded in effecting the death of the young Emperor almost immediately after.

Victoria's mind did not, however, sink under this double misfortune; from henceforward she resolved to preserve that throne, which, during five years, she had maintained in her son's name. She determined to

<sup>1</sup> Echard.

<sup>3</sup> Julius Alexianus.

<sup>4</sup> Univ. Hist.

<sup>2</sup> Sir F. Palgrave.

<sup>5</sup> Lives of the Empresses.

govern over the whole empire, by electing some general who should entirely depend on herself. Marius appeared to her well fitted for this purpose, and accordingly she proposed him to the legions, and so well employed her powers of persuasion in his behalf, that she obtained his election as Emperor.<sup>1</sup>

Marius was by trade an armourer, which cast some ridicule on his election; but he was possessed of "intrepid courage, matchless strength, and blunt honesty."<sup>2</sup> In conformity with the terms on which Victoria had assisted in his elevation, she was suffered to enjoy the solid power, while the honours of the government rested on him. At the time he received the purple, notwithstanding his mean origin, he had, after passing through every inferior degree, arrived at the dignity of a general; yet so hurt was he one day at an allusion to his former condition made by one who had worked under him in his shop, to learn the trade, and who came to congratulate him when Emperor, that he received him with the greatest contempt. This unexpected conduct so provoked the man, that he killed Marius on the spot, exclaiming as he stabbed him: "This very sword you made yourself."<sup>3</sup>

Posthumus, the colleague of Victorinus, succeeded, and reigned for seven years.

In the year 266 a new opponent for the empire arose at Mentz, in the person of Ælianus,<sup>4</sup> but he was defeated by Posthumus,<sup>5</sup> who, however, so displeased the soldiers, by not yielding up the city to be plundered, that they put him and his son, the younger Posthumus, to death; when Ælianus assumed the imperial diadem, and was proclaimed in that part of Gaul bordering the Rhine, while the rest was, that which had been governed by Victorinus.<sup>6</sup> That Desidianus Ælianus had governed the Roman troops in the north of England, during the reigns of Valerian and Gallian, appears by an inscription found in Northumberland.

Trebellius Pollio writes concerning Victoria, that after she had beheld her son and grandson slain by the soldiers, and the others in succession cut off, she stirred up Tetricus, a man of a noble family, and chief ruler of Aquitaine, to seize the rule; and by largely bribing the legions, Victoria at length caused him to be proclaimed Emperor, together with his son Caesar, throughout Gaul, and he was soon after acknowledged in Spain and Britain.

Tetricus, who was related to the Empress-Queen Victoria, was, at the time of his elevation, commanding a part of Gaul; and as soon as Victoria had procured his nomination, she sent an express to inform him of his new dignity, exhorting him not to refuse an honour conferred upon him by the army. He received the imperial robe at Bordeaux, and

<sup>1</sup> Lives of the Emperresses.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon.

<sup>3</sup> Lives of the Emperresses.

<sup>4</sup> "Lollianus and Ælianus are supposed to be the same."—*Gibbon*.

<sup>5</sup> Some coins of Posthumus were found in a Roman vase, which contained others of the Emperor Valerian, and was dug up by some workmen in a field, at Charlton, in Cheshire, where they had been buried three feet below the surface.—*Journal of Science and the Arts*.

<sup>6</sup> Univ. Hist.



shortly after showed himself worthy of his election and the Queen's patronage, by the courage and judgment he displayed during the war in Spain. In his absence in that country, Victoria held the entire government of Gaul, and conducted every affair of the state, according to the arrangement she had made with Tetricus. Placing herself at the head of her army, she maintained her authority independent of the Roman arms; for after successfully making head against Gallien, after placing in succession her son, grandson, and Marius on the throne, she had raised Tetricus to the empire, in spite of the power of Claudius. Coins of brass, gold, and silver, were coined in her name, and bore her impression, specimens of which were still to be seen at Treves, in the time of Pollio. Even during the reign of Aurelian, she opposed the imperial arms with an undaunted spirit. At that time Tetricus was in Britain, and Aurelian despatched Constantius Chlorus to that country to oppose him.<sup>1</sup> It is not certain whether Victoria herself was ever in this island, but a city in Scotland bears the name of the heroine. So great was the renown of this Queen, that it had not only filled all Gaul, but had spread to the limits of the Eastern Roman Empire. Zenobia, the competitor of Aurelian, heard with pleasure of the grandeur of the "Heroin of the West," and is said to have desired nothing so much as to join her forces to those of the Amazonian Queen, that they might together conquer the whole world!<sup>2</sup>

Tetricus had at first yielded to the desire of Victoria, to enjoy the supreme authority; but as soon as he was securely fixed in power, he resolved to shake off the sway of a woman. Victoria, deeply wounded at his ingratitude, would have revenged herself; but Tetricus, aware of her intention, put a period to her existence, within a few months after he had received from her the gift of an empire. Thus, in the very height of her power and success, this remarkable woman, distinguished for her powers of mind and masculine judgment, was cut off by means of the very agent which she had herself created, in hopes of securing the continuance of her sway.

It is thought that the traitor Emperor had expected by this means to ingratiate himself with Aurelian, at whose feet he shortly after threw himself, to be dealt with according to his pleasure.<sup>3</sup> At this critical juncture, when Victoria was no more, and Tetricus in his power, the Gallic army was attacked by the forces of Aurelian, when, fighting without a leader and without order, it was easily cut to pieces. By this decisive victory, near Châlons upon the Marne, the Emperor Aurelian obtained the dominion of Gaul, Spain, and Britain. The year 274 witnessed his triumphal entry into Rome, which was conducted in the most superb manner, and graced by the presence of Zenobia and Tetricus. The captives of the several conquered nations, on this memorable occasion, followed the triumphal chariot with their hands tied behind them. The Eastern Queen was so loaded with jewels, that she could scarce support their weight, but was compelled to stop from time to time to take

<sup>1</sup> Morant's Colchester.

<sup>2</sup> Lives of the Empresses.

<sup>3</sup> The reign of Tetricus lasted altogether for six years.



breath: some Egyptians of rank, taken at the defeat of Firmus, and the principal lords of Palmyra, did honour to this ceremony. Amongst the rest were seen Tetricus; his son accompanied him: both were attired in the Gallic costume,—trowsers, a saffron tunic, and a purple mantle, “one of the earliest instances of French fashions,” remarks Lady Morgan, “recorded in the pages of history.”

The Romans were surprised that Aurelian should 'cause a woman, and a Roman senator, who had been Consul, to mix in the procession with the Goths, Vandals, and other barbarians; but the Emperor justified his conduct on this point to the Senate, and ever after treated Tetricus with the greatest kindness, to repair the affront put upon him, calling him at times his “colleague,” and at others honouring him with the empty title of “Emperor.”

Victoria was more happy than either Zenobia or Tetricus, in having escaped by death<sup>1</sup> the indignity of appearing in this humiliating scene. She left her fame untarnished by disgrace, to descend with the memory of her virtues to succeeding ages.

The renown of Victoria inspired the women of her times with high projects and haughty daring. Through the suggestions of Viturgia, wife of Proculus, that robber chieftain afterwards assumed the imperial power at Cologne.<sup>2</sup> Viturgia was seconded in her ambitious project by Sampso, a woman of as much spirit and daring as she herself possessed, endowed with a manly courage. Proculus had first armed two thousand slaves on his own behalf; after which he entered the army, became Tribune, and had the command of several legions, which instigated him to attempt the purple. Further stimulated by his wife, and supported by the people of Cologne, he caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor in that city, and was afterwards acknowledged throughout the western division of the Roman Empire, including Britain. Proculus was, however, defeated by Probus, and taking refuge with the Franks, from whom he pretended to derive his origin, was delivered up to the Emperor, and punished as he merited.

The famous Bonosus, the colleague in power of Proculus, was of Spanish descent, but his parents were of British birth,<sup>3</sup> and his father taught the rudiments of the Latin language, then the vehicle of all learning in a public school. Bonosus had entered the army very young, and from a soldier worked his way up through the successive intervening degrees, till he became a general under Aurelian. The Emperor who had made him Governor under Rhætia, gave him for his wife a princess of the blood-royal of the Goths, whom he had made his prisoner during his twenty years' war against that people. Hunila, and nine other Gothic women, in the habit of the other sex, had fought in an engagement between Aurelian and Cannabaud, a Gothic prince. After the battle, in which Cannabaud was slain,<sup>4</sup> some of these females were found dead on

<sup>1</sup> Some say that the Queen died a natural death.

<sup>2</sup> Univ. Hist. Gibbon.

<sup>3</sup> Some say his mother was of Gallic origin.

<sup>4</sup> The chariot drawn by four stags, which Aurelian took from this Gothic prince, was used by him afterwards in his triumphal entry into Rome.

the battle-field, and others taken prisoners by the Romans. The latter, among whom was Hunila, were entertained by Aurelian in a manner suitable to their sex and dignity. When peace was made with the Goths, Aurelian exacted some of the sons and daughters of their chiefs as hostages, that the youths might be trained up near his own person, and the damsels be educated in the Roman fashion. Hunila and the other noble Gothic women, were given afterwards in marriage to his principal officers, in the hope that the two nations might be cemented by these close and endearing connections.<sup>1</sup>

Hunila was distinguished beyond her companions for beauty, wit, and virtue; and in giving her to Bonosus, the Emperor calculated, through her means, on becoming acquainted with the great men among the Goths, who he hoped would, in feasting and drinking with Bonosus, discover to him their secret views and designs.<sup>2</sup>

Bonosus, however, having through neglect caused the Roman fleet on the Rhine to be burnt by the Germans, was so afraid of being punished, that he assumed the sovereignty, and caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor by the troops under his command,—a position in which he maintained himself longer than was expected, his sway extending over Gaul, Spain, and Britain. The last a country which has been named “an isle fertile in usurpers.”<sup>3</sup>

Bonosus had, however, like Victorinus, a vice which counterbalanced his good qualities, that of inebriety. He was a slave to Bacchus, and is said to have been able to drink as much as ten men, without being in the least disordered;<sup>4</sup> this was the cause of his downfall. After fighting several battles with Probus, the Emperor who succeeded Aurelian, he was finally defeated in a sharp engagement, when he died by his own hand, to avoid falling into the hands of the conqueror.<sup>5</sup> When Bonosus hanged himself, his well-known failing caused the jest to be passed upon him, that “there hung a bottle not a man.”

Probus destroying the rebellious Gauls, however, not only spared the life of Hunila, on account of her virtue and beauty, but settled an annual pension upon her, and suffered the sons she had borne to Bonosus to enjoy their patrimonial estate.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon.

<sup>2</sup> Univ. Hist.

<sup>3</sup> Nearly all the Thirty Tyrants were, like Bonosus, persons of mean birth, who had become exalted through their merit, being considered as models of virtue and ability, and raised at first by the Imperial notice, had afterwards assumed the purple; the term Tyrant then signifying not an abuser of power, but simply an usurper.—*Gibbon*.

<sup>4</sup> Echard, Univ. Hist.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Probus was the first Emperor who permitted Gaul, Spain, and Britain to plant vineyards and to make wine. At the first coming of the Romans, the Britons were unacquainted with the vine, but a licence being granted by Probus for its cultivation, it soon became a very common produce. An early account of London informs us that, in the metropolis itself, we had one vineyard in East Smithfield, another in Hatton Garden (which is at this time called Vine-street), and a third in St. Giles's in the Fields. The various other Vine-streets in Bloomsbury, Westminster, Lambeth, and the Borough, have had a similar origin.

The Irish corna, or horn, was not devoted by our ancestors to martial purposes alone, but used to quaff their mead, a custom with the Danish hunters even in the present day.—*Walker*. The ancient Scots, as well as the present Highlanders, drank in shells; hence, in the old poetry, we often meet with the expression, the “chief of shells,” and the “halls of shells,” while to “rejoice in the shell,” meant to feast sumptuously and drink freely.

The poems of Ossian describe Bosmina, when sent by her father Fingal on an embassy of peace, as bearing in her right hand a sparkling shell, and in the left an arrow of gold,—the first the joyful mark of peace, the latter the sign of war. Allusion is also made by the poet to the wine of the strangers, *i. e.* the Romans, and the wax [wax-lights are often mentioned as among the spoils] taken in their warfare; this was during the expedition of Severus into the northern parts of Britain.

## ST. HELENA.

Daughter of Coel, the Hawk-faced—Particulars of her birth—Her accomplishments and virtues—Constantius in Britain—Carausius—Romantic stories of Helena—Disputes as to her birth—Colchester claims the honour—She marries Constantius—Her children—Reverses—Galerius and Valeria—Constantius and Theodora—Maximian—Helena's self-devotion—Empty honours—Constantine at Rome—The four Empires—York—Character of Constantius—Persecution of Christians—Theodora's children—Constantia—Death of Constantius—Excellent conduct of Helena to Theodora—Power she enjoyed—Fausta and her father: The Plot discovered, and its punishment—Policy of Helena—Expedition of Constantine against Maxentius—The Cross—Conversion of the Emperor—Cities founded in honour of Helena—Helena's writings—Tragedy of Fausta and her son—Helena undertakes the care of the children of the Emperor—At eighty, Helena undertakes her journey to the East—The finding of the Cross—Relics—Her death—Honours to her memory—Traces of Helena in Britain—Her Causeway.

“Coell ruled the realme in lawe and peace full well,  
A doghter had he, and none other heyre,—  
Eleyne that hight, farre passing good and fayre.”

*Harding's Chronicle.*

“Of all the Christian world, that Empress most renowned,  
Constantius' worthy wife.”—*Drayton's Poly Olbion.*

IN such terms as these are we introduced by the poets to the Empress Queen, St. Helena, whose fine character and whose romantic history afford a most brilliant and pleasing subject for biography.

Coel,<sup>1</sup> King of the Britons, the father of Helena, by some surnamed “the Hawk-Faced,” began to reign over that portion of territory known in the present day as Essex and Hertfordshire, in the year 238,<sup>2</sup> and added the principality of North Wales to his dominions shortly after, by his marriage with Seradwen, its heiress, a princess descended of the royal house of Eudda,<sup>3</sup> whence in still later times came the—

“Pendragon kings of Uther's royal race,”

amongst whom was the celebrated Arthur.

The wife of Coel was the only daughter of Cadfan, son of Conan ap Eudda, King of Wales.

It is supposed by some writers that one daughter alone was born to the royal pair, the princess afterwards known as St. Helena; there were, how-

<sup>1</sup> Harding, Kennet, Baronius, Lewis, Polydore, Virgil, Baleus, and many others, assert that Helen was daughter of Coel, King of the Britons.

<sup>2</sup> Colchester Chronicle.

<sup>3</sup> Sir John Price, Warrington, Rowlands.



ever, three children; of whom the eldest was Tiboen, or Helena; the second, Guala, the British name of Julia; and the third, a prince who bore the maternal family designation of Conan.<sup>1</sup> Of this prince, who, on his father's death, retired, to govern over the northern territories acquired by his mother Seradwen, which are placed by one of our writers<sup>2</sup> at the wall of Antoninus, history almost entirely loses sight in following the more splendid fortunes of his two royal sisters, Helena and Julia; the one destined to create a new line of Emperors in the Roman world; the other, to transmit to her descendants that imperial dignity, which, through the royal current of the Pendragon family, descended to Cadwallader, the last British Prince of Wales of Roman descent, and passed on to the family of Tudor, of which Henry the Seventh was the first, and our present Sovereign Lady, Victoria, the latest royal representative.<sup>3</sup>

Helena was a name derived from the Greek, signifying "pitiful," and given in later times to Coel's daughter, by the Romans, on account of her compassionate disposition. Her true British name was Tiboen,<sup>4</sup> thus written in some Welch lines quoted by Mr. Rowlands:—

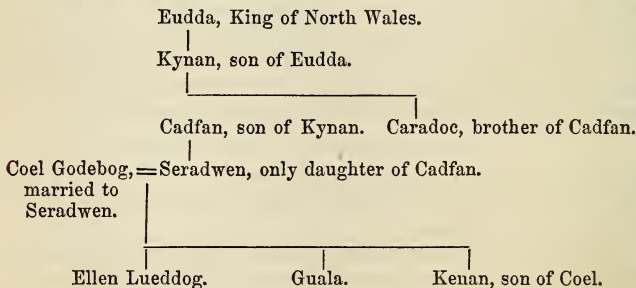
"Tiboen ferch Coel Godebog  
I Grêd a gafodd y Grôg."

Many other titles were borne by this excellent princess, such as the surname of "Lueddog," and the noble name of Flavia obtained on her marriage with Constantius, the descendant of Vespasian, who derived it from that Emperor, through his own great-uncle, Claudius Gothicus. The title of Augusta was added when Helena was made Empress; consequently, by some historians she is called Flavia Julia Helena Augusta; her brilliant fortunes towards the close of her long career acquired her, moreover, the epithets of "the Prosperous" and "the Powerful;" and to crown the virtue and piety of this memorable princess with the highest distinction, the religious of after-ages have awarded to her the veneration of a saint; so that the name of St. Helena has descended to us with more than mere mortal celebrity.

<sup>1</sup> Or, Cenán ap Coel; Rowland's *Mona Antiqua*.

<sup>2</sup> Carte, Gibbon.

<sup>3</sup> The following table exhibits the House of Eudda:—



In this table [taken from Owen's Pedigrees] the name of Ellen Lueddog is substituted for that of Tiboen, or Helen, used by Mr. Rowlands, and for Dyfyn, the name attributed by Sir John Price to her.

<sup>4</sup> In the north of England, Tibby is still used as an abbreviation of Helen.

Roman and British writers differ in many particulars respecting the life of the daughter of Coel. Those Greek and Latin authors who were her contemporaries, writing with the party-spirit of their times, have testified a partiality to the side of their own country, whenever its honour became placed in collision with that of Britain. As regards the history of a princess of British birth, the testimonials of her native historians are probably most to be depended upon, and may be considered as surer guides to truth.

The principal evidence extant, respecting the birth of St. Helena, is that of the "*Colchester Chronicle*," preserved in that city. According to this document, her birth took place at Colchester, about A. D. 242, four years after her father mounted the throne.<sup>1</sup> This testimony is not only universally admitted by British historians, and confirmed by foreign writers, but borne out by the local traditions of that neighbourhood; for from ages past, even to the present day, it has been the boast of the inhabitants of Colchester, that St. Helena was born there; and in commemoration of the holy cross which she afterwards discovered, the arms of the town are a knotty cross between four crowns.<sup>2</sup>

The erroneous idea taken up by some authors, of Helena being an only child, seems to have arisen from the superior pains bestowed on her education by her father, who destined her to become his successor on the throne. To be Queen of the Britons, even then, was a high and glorious destiny; but Coel could scarcely have imagined to what an eminence she would rise, when he predicted, from the precocity of Helena's talents, the distinction she would attain; and, in consequence, determined that her brother and sister should receive as their inheritance his northern states,<sup>3</sup> and the southern be appropriated to her, his eldest-born. Coel, however proud of her acquirements, could not then have contemplated, in this favourite child, the future Roman Empress,—one with whose name all the Roman as well the British Empire, should resound; nor could he dream that the daughter of a Pagan prince should lead the bright procession of Christian converts onward to an immortal and imperishable kingdom, unlike his, never to pass away! Yet such was the career marked out by Heaven for the Empress Queen of Constantius, the daughter of the British Coel.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Morant's *Colchester*, Baleus, Lewis.

<sup>2</sup> The following is the entry in the beginning of the ancient Record Book of that city, commonly called the Oath Book, which by the hand appears to have been written about the beginning of Edward III.'s reign; A. D. 242, *Helena filia Coelis nascitur in Colocestria.*" Morant's *Colchester*, Baleus, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

<sup>3</sup> At a later period, probably after Cenau ap Coel's death, the Princess Julia, marrying Edern ap Padarn, a northern prince, inherited her mother's Welsh estates.—*Owen's Pedigrees*.

<sup>4</sup> Leland, Camden, Glastonbury Historian, &c. Among those who call Helena a native of Britain, without naming Colchester, were Butler, Polydore Vergil, and Flavius Julius Dexter. St. Ambrose, Cedrenus, Nicephorus, cited by Gibbon, and other modern writers, deny that she was a native of Britain. Camden tells us, only one author states she was born at Naissus; and Drake calls her a native of York, from a speech made by some English orators at the councils of Constance and Basil,—an opinion, he thought, which received confirmation from the anonymous panegyrist of her son Constantine.

Gifted by nature in a preëminent degree, Helena's beauty surpassed that of any of the British maidens, her companions; she possessed, moreover, "an innate brightness of wit, eloquence of speech, and elegant manners," which added still greater charms.<sup>2</sup> In a knowledge of the liberal arts, she is said not only to have surpassed her own countrywomen, but those of every other nation; and she was particularly distinguished by her taste for music, in which she had attained great proficiency. Spenser, in his "*Faerie Queene*," thus celebrates the praises of our Island Princess, whom he calls—

"Fayre Helena, the fairest living wight,  
Who in all godly themes and goodly praise  
Did far excell, but was most famous hight  
For skill in musicke of all in her daies,  
As well in curious instruments as cunninge laies."

There seems to be no doubt that Helena was both a musician and a poetess, for certain literary works attributed to her are even now said to be extant; among which are noted a volume of Greek poems,—for Helena was deeply read in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin lore.<sup>3</sup> Even a royal lady of modern times might have been proud of the compliments lavished on the daughter of Coel by historians; one calling her "both fair, and wise, and good, and well lettered,"<sup>4</sup> while another designates her "a noble lady and a learned."<sup>5</sup>

She had arrived at her eighteenth year<sup>6</sup> when the event occurred which drew her forth from her studious life, and shed the first bright ray on the path of her future greatness. This was her marriage to Constantius, at that time only in the dawn of his own rising fortunes.

Flavius Valerius Constantius, surnamed "*Chlorus*," according to some historians, from the green garments he wore in childhood, or from his pale complexion, was of imperial descent, his mother Claudia being niece of the Emperor Claudius Gothicus.<sup>7</sup> His father, a noble lord of Illyria, was a native of Naissus, the capital of the Dardanian nation, which consisted of a great part of Moesia, and there the earliest years of Constantius were passed. There also the orders of Aurelian, under whom the youth first bore arms, reached him. For these reasons the city was, in after-times, embellished by the filial affection of his son, Constantine the Great, with many noble buildings.

Though Aurelian never visited Britain in person, he was a great deal in Gaul during the wars with the usurpers; and Constantius also was there, no doubt, at that time, having entered the army at the age of fourteen, and being at the time of Aurelian's accession in his twentieth year, A. D. 270. Three years after, when Zenobia and Tetricus were being paraded in Rome, in the triumphal procession of Aurelian, Constantius was distinguishing himself, and obtained a great victory for the Romans, at Vindomessa, in Switzerland. He afterwards was known as the "con-

<sup>1</sup> Owain's Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Baleus.

<sup>3</sup> Caxton.

<sup>4</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth.

<sup>7</sup> Vie de Constantin; Leigh's Choice Observations.



queror of Spain,"<sup>1</sup> and was received into the body-guard of Probus. On the defeat of Bonosus and Proculus, by a singular coincidence we find Constantius, Carus, Dioclesian, and Maximian, walking together in triumphal procession into the Roman capital, each of whom were subsequently raised to the empire. Constantius afterwards commanded a legion as Tribune; and the Emperor Carus, who made him Governor of Dalmatia, had some thoughts of naming him his successor, instead of the worthless Carinus, his son. After Carinus and Numerian, sons of Carus, the empire devolved on Dioclesian, A. D. 284. It was to oppose Carinus that Dioclesian first created Maximian Cæsar; and afterwards, on the death of that Emperor, he saluted him as his own colleague and partner in the imperial dignity, A. D. 286.<sup>2</sup>

According to Platina, Constantius obtained a great victory in Gaul, under Probus, when several thousand German mercenaries were slain, through his bravery in renewing the fight after an unsuccessful engagement; and, in consequence, peace was restored to the province. It is certain that his uncle Claudius fought against the Gauls under Posthumus. The same author dates this event in A. D. 281, in which year Maximian Hercules is said to have made himself master of Britain, it being ten years after Carausius was slain. We find that Dioclesian sent Maximian into Gaul to quell an insurrection, about two years before the creation of the Cæsars (Constantius and Galerius), and that he was afterwards created Augustus by Dioclesian.<sup>3</sup>

There seems every likelihood that in this campaign Constantius acted in co-operation with Maximian, but there is an error as to the date, as the victory of Probus occurred many years earlier, and most likely that was the date of Helena's marriage.

There seems no doubt that it was during the wars of the Empire against the usurpers in Gaul that Constantius paid his first visit to Britain.

One of the most formidable enemies of Rome at this period was Carausius, a man of great bravery, but mean birth, employed by the Empire to guard the frontiers of Britain from invasion. Maximian, then associated with Dioclesian, who had ordered him to be stationed at Boulogne for that purpose, finding he had turned the power invested in him to his own advantage, ordered him to be put to death; but Carausius escaped into Britain, where having many followers, he assumed the purple, and caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor. Maximian, unable to contend at the time until a fleet was prepared, permitted him to continue in his assumed power; and at this time Carausius boldly issued a medal, associating himself with Dioclesian and Maximian, of which the legend was—"THE PEACE OF THE THREE AUGUSTI."<sup>4</sup> After several years, Allectus was sent to reduce him to dependence on the Empire; but that traitor, uniting in his schemes, at first governed in his name, and afterwards betrayed and killed him, and ruled in his own behalf for the space of three years as Augustus. The Britons, oppressed by the tyranny of Allectus, placed

<sup>1</sup> John Rous, Colchester Chronicle, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, Gibbon.

<sup>3</sup> Platina.

<sup>4</sup> Hoffman's Univ. Lexicon.



themselves under the command of Asclepiodatus,<sup>1</sup> who, after slaying Allectus, assumed the supreme power for a time, and in his turn was doomed to fall in a contest with Coel, father of St. Helena.

The deceased Asclepiodatus was a Briton by birth, and by descent Duke of Cornwall:<sup>2</sup> he was also a prætorian præfect, and led the Roman fleet; so that both he and his predecessor, Allectus, had assumed the supreme power in the Roman name. When, therefore, Coel conquered Asclepiodatus, it became necessary to vindicate the Empire, for he was not only a Briton, but king by ancient right of descent; and the Romans, fearing all authority in the island would cease to exist, despatched Constantius Chlorus to redeem their tarnished honour, and revive the laurels of his country.

Coel, having openly become, by the train of circumstances just detailed, the enemy of Rome,<sup>3</sup> Constantius, on his arrival, proceeded to lay siege to the city of Colchester, the capital of his dominions, which, as some say, was bravely defended for three years, but at length relieved, upon the Roman general entering into a treaty with the King for the hand of his daughter, "the fayre Helena." Some relate that Coel, knowing that Constantius was "a wise and bold man,"<sup>4</sup> and noted for bravery, sent, on his own part, ambassadors, to offer peace and submission to the Roman power, provided he was allowed to retain his kingdom, on payment of the usual tribute. With this Constantius complied, and Coel confirmed the treaty, by bestowing on the general the hand of his daughter<sup>5</sup> when "Constantius espoused her with much honour."<sup>6</sup>

A romantic, but somewhat improbable, incident has been related of the first introduction of Constantius and Helena. It is said that the nurse, or "attendant maiden," of the princess, dreading the dangers to which her youth and beauty might be exposed, if she were beheld by any of the lawless soldiers of the Roman army then besieging the city, disguised her young mistress in humble attire as a poor maiden, and concealed her in the house of a countryman; but the precaution was in vain. The chance of war conducted Constantius to her retreat, who was so charmed

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<sup>1</sup> Bran ap Lyr, or Asclepiodatus, [Rowland's *Mona. Antiq.*] began to reign A. D. 232, and his power lasted thirty years; he much injured the Roman authority, and the news of his death gave great joy at Rome. [Holinshed.] The sister of Asclepiodatus was called Bronwen, the White-Necked; and Harlech Castle was anciently called Tôr Bronwen, because it was the place of her abode. [Pennant's *Snowden.*]

Carausius, keeping for his own use the booty he took from the Saxon pirates, made Maximian think that he connived at their piracies. The wealth earned by his exploits and reputation caused him to be hailed Augustus by the Britons. He is said to have built vessels of war, and the many medals struck by him, impressed with various devices and inscriptions, testify the pomp and splendour of his reign. One of the coins of Carausius bears the ensigns of the Eternal City; and, as Sir F. Palgrave remarks, "it is very remarkable that the wolf and the twins are copied upon the rude mintage of Ethelbert, the Bretwalda or Emperor of Anglo-Saxon Britain."

<sup>2</sup> Carew's *Survey of Cornwall.*

<sup>3</sup> John Rous, Morant.

<sup>4</sup> John Rous.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, John Rous, Warrington, Morant.

<sup>6</sup> Caxton.

with Helena, that he carried her off. On discovering, however, much to his surprise, that she was the King's daughter, he made her his wife.

To this important incident, if it really did occur, may be attributed some of the stories which have been circulated to the disadvantage of Helena, disputing the legality of her union with Constantius. The *Colchester Chronicle* itself mentions her, in some instances, as "*Concubina*;" and it becomes rather an important question, to inquire into the exact particulars of her union with Constantius.

The word "*concubina*" is sometimes used "*in bonem partem*" for a wife as well as a concubine, and, in relation to Helena's tie, simply meant a lady of inferior dignity to the daughter of Maximian, whom Constantius espoused at an after-date. Marianus Scotus, who boldly defends Helena, says that she who was "a King's daughter, a Cæsar's wife, and an Emperor's mother, was no concubine." Two authors, however, have stigmatised her memory with this accusation — Julian, the apostate, and Zosimus; of whom the former was an Emperor of Rome, who tried, by every means in his power, to subvert the attempts made by Helena and her son Constantine to establish the Christian faith; the latter a Greek historian and a pagan, who is noted by ecclesiastical writers, as remarkable for the prejudice with which he has treated the Christian Emperors, and especially for his severity towards Constantine the Great.<sup>1</sup> St. Ambrose, the only respectable witness against Helena,<sup>2</sup> asserts a startling fact, that Helena was first seen by Constantius in his march from Persia (when passing through Nicomedia), at an inn in the little town of Drepanum, where he had fixed his quarters.<sup>3</sup> Had this circumstance been known to Zosimus, the declared enemy of Constantine, he would not have failed to make use of it. Several other historians say, that the union of Constantius with Coel's daughter was not legal.<sup>4</sup> The author of the History of Colchester, adopting the record of that city, says: "The constant tradition amongst us has always been, that Helena had by Constantius her son Constantine born *before marriage*; but, soon after the birth, he married her, and adopted him." This tradition, preserved in the old British memoirs, is published by Geoffrey of Monmouth, and other authors of various times and nations, of whom Michael Alford, who wrote expressly on the subject, cites no less than seventy.<sup>5</sup>

There are, on the other hand, many who declare Helena to have been the lawful wife of Constantius. That elaborate writer, Mr. Butler, in his memoir, says, "*it is certain she was married to him*;"<sup>6</sup> and Crevier, in his "*Lives of Roman Emperors*," speaks thus on this important point: "Some, even Christian authors, have disputed the marriage of Constantius, and thus rendered illegitimate the birth of Constantine. But, in

<sup>1</sup> Aikin's Biography.

<sup>2</sup> Crevier.

<sup>3</sup> St. Ambrose and Nicephorus both relate the same story, and the former has been copied by several French writers.

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius, Orosius, St. Jerome, Cassiodorus, and Bede.

<sup>5</sup> Morant.

<sup>6</sup> At Naples is still extant an inscription, in which Helena is styled the wife of Constantius. In two others, to be seen in Gruter, she is distinguished with the title of Augusta, which was never given, as is well known, to a concubine.

reality, this opinion seems to have had no other foundation<sup>1</sup> than Helena's being of greatly inferior rank to her husband.<sup>2</sup> That excepted, everything conspires to make us look upon her as united to Constantius by a lawful alliance; the distinction which Constantine always enjoyed at Dioclesian's court, where he held the first rank next to the Emperor; the very circumstance of his being an hostage, which supposes him to have been dear to his father as a son destined to succeed him; and the great encomiums given by panegyrists to the chastity of Constantius, whom his son is praised for having imitated, which make it probable that Constantine was the legitimate son of Constantius Chlorus." Indeed, had any further proof of this been wanting, it was furnished afterwards by an address made to Constantine himself, on the occasion of his marriage to Fausta, daughter of Maximian, by his learned and elegant, but unknown panegyrist, who speaking of Constantius, says: "He had freed the provinces of Britain from slavery; you ennobled them by your origin!"

The enemies of her faith sought thus to disparage her memory; but the fact of a Roman Emperor, as Constantius afterwards became, having espoused a British woman, was, in those days, sufficiently extraordinary to create comments on the legality of the tie. Gwenissa, daughter of Claudius, is not even named by Roman writers, in their disdainful contempt of her alliance with the British Arviragus; and Helena's son is stigmatized as illegitimate, no doubt from similar reasons. The daughter of Coel was held to be a match beneath the dignity of the Roman name; yet it is not impossible that hers was what is yet known as a *handfast marriage* in Scotland, the country from the neighbourhood of which her mother came, and that this had given colour to the account of her son's illegitimacy. That Helena possessed great attractions, even in the eyes of one of the most wise and accomplished senators of Rome, is unquestioned; and the gentleness and amiability of Constantius in times of peace, as renowned as his bravery in war, must have confirmed the attachment of the island princess. Ample testimonials exist of the tender affection which subsisted between them, an affection still more strongly cemented by the birth of a son, to be afterwards known as Constantine the Great,<sup>3</sup>—a title bestowed on him for his many shining talents and great actions. Whether Britain or Dacia<sup>4</sup> was the birthplace of this

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<sup>1</sup> Some writers call Helena "obscuri generis." Julius Flavius Dexta calls her "a chief woman of Britain," and Mr. Lewis, "a king's daughter," denying the assertion of her mean origin. As her father was "master of the horse to the Emperor," some have called her a housekeeper's daughter; from that arose the title of "Comes Stabuli, or constable" (Lewis); but others again designate her as Stabularia, from her having built a church afterwards over the manger in which our Lord was laid at his birth. As well as the encomiums of historians on her virtue, she was, according to Polydore Vergil, "a very virtuous woman." See other authors, who speak of her in terms which could not have been bestowed on one who was exceptionable in one of the first of woman's attributes.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon dismisses the question by saying, "We are obliged to confess that Helena was the daughter of an innkeeper."

<sup>3</sup> Platina's Lives of the Popes.

<sup>4</sup> That Britain was Helena's own birthplace and that of her son Constantine is, according to Camden, "what all historians who have written on that subject, ex-



prince has been a subject of dispute, literary and national, as well it might, for honours are coveted by all; but the general opinion is that Constantine was born at Colchester, the native city of Helena, and can consequently be claimed as British. This would never have been questioned, but that Helena, subsequently to her marriage, at times accompanied her husband in his foreign campaigns. Nor is it the least convincing proof of the legality of Helena's tie with Constantius, that the latter entrusted this son, the child of his dearest affections, to the maternal care of Helena for his education, knowing that her enlightened and cultivated mind fitted her for so arduous a task.

It is an acknowledged fact, that in the history of nearly all those individuals who have attained an eminent distinction for great or good qualities, the hand of a mother may be traced as implanting the first seeds which ripener years have matured. How honourable was the appellation of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi! How high a lustre is still shed on the name of Helena—when added to it is that title which speaks volumes in her praise—the mother of Constantine the Great!

Mr. Morant, in his *History of Colchester*, says, the city walls were most probably built in the times of the Romans. He remarks, “the west wall reached as far as St. Helen's Lane. On the north and east side the castle was secured by a ditch and rampart of earth. This rampart is thrown up upon a wall that formerly encompassed either the castle or the palace of Coel, on the site whereof the castle is built, the buttresses, and other parts of which, have been lately discovered.” That Colchester had strong walls and a castle subsequent to this period, is a fact attested by the remains of both, even in the present day. The castle was built by Edward the Elder, who also repaired the city walls; and, says the same writer, “if there were any remains of Coel's palace, he might perhaps bestow some pains in repairing that too, and making it a kind of fortification. The present castle was built after the Norman Conquest.”

As the walls of London are said to have been built by Helena about this date,<sup>1</sup> Colchester was very probably fortified at the same time; for Constantius would naturally be anxious to defend his capital against the hostile incursions of neighbouring princes. Many writers attribute the walls of Colchester to Helena rather than to her father,<sup>2</sup> and it is

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cept Cedrenus and Nicephorus, affirm with one voice.” Julius Firmicus, a Christian writer, who lived soon after the death of Constantius, says, in his work “On the Error of Profane Religion,” that Constantine was born at Tarsus, near Nicomedia, in Bithynia, a town of Dacia. Others fix his birth at Naissus, near the Dardanelles (Bayle's Dictionary); but there the son is confounded with the father. (See Camden and Butler.)

<sup>1</sup> *Miscellaneous History*. The creeks about Colchester and the Mersey Island are celebrated for their fine oyster-beds: this fact alone rendered it a favourite residence with the Romans. It was from this people we first learnt the art of fattening our oysters in artificial beds, the feeding-pits being first invented about ninety years before Christ, and the place where they were first constructed was upon the shore of Baiæ. Even as early as the reign of Vespasian, the British oyster was deemed famous among their luxurious Roman conquerors, and thought worthy to be carried into Italy. [Whittaker; Britton and Brayley.]

<sup>2</sup> Stowe, John Rous.



beyond question that Constantius, who displayed great talent in architectural designs, assisted his consort in the undertaking. Britain is said to have owed many of her public works and ornaments to Constantius, who invited over architects from abroad to assist in carrying out his plans for the advantage of the people and security of the Roman government. The city of Worcester is said to be of his foundation.<sup>1</sup> It is not, therefore, surprising that the oldest parochial church in the city should bear the name of St. Helen. Chlorendon Park, near Sarum, in Wiltshire, received from him its name of "Chloren," which, some say, had been given him by the Britons on account of his wearing a long train which was carried after him, this being the toga or robe which betokened his rank as a senator of Rome. Chlorendon, now Clarendon Park, says Mr. Kennet, "is a park the size of which exceeds any park in the kingdom; in the north part of which, next Chloren, is a church covered over with ivy, called Ivy Church; and to give credit to a late poet, the park had in it twenty groves, each of which was a mile in compass, and it contained a house of the king's within it, but long since dilapidated." In the time of Constantius, a fortification was built by that prince on the side of the down near Sarum, of which the ramparts are yet remaining; it bore the name of Chloren, like the park in which the Roman King of Britain designed to make his own residence.<sup>2</sup>

For some years after Coel's death Constantius remained in Britain, adding improvements for the public benefit, and maintaining the security of the Roman interest. During this interval he paid the customary tribute on his own account to the Roman Emperor.<sup>3</sup>

Several children were born to the Roman King of Britain; the name of the eldest does not appear. A quarrel had arisen between him and his younger brother Lucius, and he was unhappily killed by the latter; for which Constantius exiled the fratricide from Britain, appointing him to dwell in Aquitaine. The penitent prince subsequently embraced the Christian faith, and entered the Church, first becoming an elder, and afterwards bishop. "He built a house of prayer, in which he and his followers worshipped God."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Green's History of Worcester.

<sup>2</sup> One of the groves in Chlorendon Park yet remains to attest its Roman origin, being composed of chesnut. The chesnut was first introduced into Britain from Lydia by our Roman conquerors, and, in all likelihood, first by Constantius himself.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis.

<sup>4</sup> As this prince's history does not appear again in conjunction with that of Constantius and Helena, it may be named here, that Constantine, his brother, after his own conversion and accession to the empire, promoted Lucius to several ecclesiastical situations; who finally went into Rhetia, accompanied by his sister Emerita, and near the city of Augusta, converted the Curienses to the faith of Christ. He was put to death in the *Castor Martis*, and buried in the city of Augusta, where his festival was kept on the 3d of December. The truth of these particulars is attested by the abbey founded by Prince Lucius, and an ancient hymn composed to his honour, entitled "*Gaude Lucionem*." Emerita, daughter of Helen, also was martyred in *Trinicastell*, where her brother Lucius dwelt. [Hermanus Schedelius, *Holinshed*.]

During the interval between the death of Coel and Constantius mounting his throne in Britain, and that in which he succeeded to the Roman empire, this great man made more than one campaign abroad; and under all the changing vicissitudes of the roving life of Constantius, Helena and her first-born, Constantine, were his constant companions.

The daughter of Coel afterwards accompanied her husband in his campaigns abroad. We are expressly informed<sup>1</sup> that Constantius, who "surpassed all others in his endeavours to increase the Roman commonwealth,<sup>2</sup> accompanied by his *wife*, Flavia Helena Augusta, passed out of Britain into Germany, attended by an infinite number of Britons, of whom it is thought the city Bretta derived its name."<sup>3</sup> Constantius was founder of the city of Constantine, in Normandy. The sea adjoining Bithynia, from this Empress also, was called Helenapontus, or Hellespont."<sup>4</sup>

A period of reverse, however, was at hand, which was destined to throw a deep shade over the mother and son. The details which led to this misfortune must necessarily be given.

About six years after those revolutions in the mighty empire of Rome, which had associated Dioclesian and Maximian in the cares of supreme power, the joint Emperors agreed to elect two Cæsars as their colleagues, each of whom, by being appointed ruler over a certain portion of dominions belonging to them, should render assistance in preserving order over their extended empire. The persons on whom their choice fell were Galerius and Constantius, and to the proposed honour about to be conferred one only condition was affixed, one calculated to insure the dignity of those elected, that of each becoming the adopted son, or rather son-in-law, of the two Emperors. It was previously determined by Dioclesian and Maximian, that in case of the newly created Cæsars being already married, they should repudiate their wives, and be left free to espouse the imperial brides destined to them. Galerius was originally a shepherd of Illyria, but had afterwards become a soldier of Rome; his character was a mixture of cruelty and bravery. His pride at such an advancement to fortune made him willingly agree to put away from him his wife, for he also was married, and he received the hand of the fair Valeria; by which the general who had led his army before the victory, became second only in rank to his imperial father-in-law Dioclesian, and his colleague. Had his worth been far greater, he might well have been proud of receiving the hand of a bride so amiable as the highly gifted Valeria, who, as well as her mother, stood high in the estimation of the Romans: he dismissed, therefore, without a sigh the partner of his humbler fortunes, and took his new honours cheerfully. With Constantius Chlorus the circumstances were different in all respects.

The beautiful Flavia Theodora was not indeed the daughter of Maximian, but of his wife, the Empress Galeria Valeria Eutropia, by a noble Syrian who had died shortly after the birth of this, their only child. The widow's beauty had attracted many admirers, and amongst others

<sup>1</sup> By Lewis, in Hist. of Britain.

<sup>2</sup> John Rous.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis.

<sup>4</sup> John Rous.

Herculeus Maximian, who, though in person more calculated to inspire terror than love, was successful in his suit. Eutropia being dazzled by the prospect of an imperial diadem, as soon as her appointed time for mourning was at an end, gave her hand to Maximian, and the first link was wrought by that step for the future fortunes of Theodora. From that time Rome had two reigning Emperors, and two Empresses had presided over the female world of Rome, Prisca and Eutropia, entirely different in character, though so nearly allied in rank and dignity. Prisca, wife of Dioclesian, adorned the throne by her virtue and good sense, while a Christian by practice as well as precept, she viewed without distrust or jealousy her beautiful rival Eutropia, who, naturally disposed to gaiety and diversion, though she had, at her first elevation, cautiously concealed her levity of character, soon yielded herself up to its dictates. Entirely indifferent to her husband, she encouraged admirers, and allowed the attentions of a handsome Syrian; yet so far was Maximian from resenting Eutropia's conduct, that he appeared blind to this intimacy. His great desire for an heir who might perpetuate the honours of his family was vainly indulged during some years. When, therefore, the infant Maxentius was born, in spite of the evil reports of his wife's fidelity, he hailed the event with transports of joy, and brought the child up with the utmost care and expense as his own son and heir to an empire. The near relationship of Constantius to his Empress was one reason why Maximian had determined to ally him with his daughter-in-law; and he had, moreover, stipulated with Dioclesian that he should become his successor in the Empire. It was known to both, that the person whom their policy selected was already the husband of a British woman of royal lineage, whose inheritance he now enjoyed, and by whom he had, moreover, become father of several children; but it did not enter into their minds to compare the obscure Helena with the brilliant, beautiful, and witty Theodora, or weigh in the same balance the petty throne of a British State with the imperial diadem of Rome!

The struggle was great in the mind of Constantius. Nevertheless the imperial will could not be thwarted, though Constantius betrayed an evident reluctance to the marriage with Theodora; he could not forget that by divorcing himself from Helena, still tenderly beloved, an ignominious stain would be cast on the birth of her young son Constantine, now in the bloom of youth and hope.

It is said that the earnest solicitations of Helena alone decided him; regardless of herself at this trying moment, she was earnest in her exhortations to her husband to accept a step so calculated to promote his present personal advantage. He consented, accordingly, to a separation from Helena; and Dioclesian, by taking every step necessary to give publicity to their divorce, furnished the world with the most conclusive proof that their marriage had been valid.<sup>1</sup> After every necessary step had been taken, Constantius espoused Theodora at Milan, and was forth-

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<sup>1</sup> Platina, in his "Lives of the Popes," says, "Constantine was the son of Constantius by Helena, whom yet he afterwards divorced to gratify Herculeus."



with invested with the government of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, with the enviable title of Cæsar,<sup>1</sup> for which he had sacrificed so much.

Theodora, shortly after her marriage, returned with him into Britain, accompanied by her mother; but while to her he became, and remained to the last, a faithful, kind and affectionate husband, his feelings towards Helena may be best conceived by the fact of the first act of his newly acquired sovereignty being to present his divorced Queen, the mother of his son, with the robe of imperial purple, by this means testifying to the world, his own sense, that she was in every respect deserving of the high rank to which he had been elevated, and which fortune alone had denied to her.

Notwithstanding this empty honour, the fate of Helena was rendered still more severe, by Constantine being taken from Britain, and from her care, by his father, and placed at the court of Dioclesian, as a hostage for his mother's fidelity to Rome. The jealous caution with which, from that moment, he was watched in all his movements, proves not only his legitimacy, and the regard by which he was esteemed by his parents, but the Emperor's fear, lest sooner or later, like Bonosus and Proculus, he should assume the sovereign power in Britain, to which his birth by Helena, and right as grandson of Coel, justly entitled him. While still an inhabitant of the imperial palace of Dioclesian, the situation of Constantine was evidently that of a dependent guest and suspected captive,—a state of bondage exchanged only for a worse, when upon Constantius requesting his son might be permitted to accompany him on his return to Britain, the Emperor, to avoid complying with the desire of the father, sent the prince to join the army in Persia and Egypt under Galerius;<sup>2</sup> there the young Briton distinguished himself in the Egyptian war by his valour during several severe actions; and there, until his father's approaching death recalled him to Britain, he remained, spending the best years of his life in the society of those who were enemies of the Christian faith, which in after-times he was called upon to protect, and separated from the nearest and dearest of his own relatives.

At this time four imperial courts were established in the Roman world, in different directions: that of Dioclesian, who maintained the govern-

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<sup>1</sup> Every preliminary being settled, the ceremony of inaugurating the new Cæsars was performed. On the first day of March, A. D. 292, Dioclesian having assembled the troops in a place about three thousand paces distant from Nicomedia, ascended an eminence, presented Galerius to the soldiery, and, with their consent, invested him with the purple. The same honour was probably conferred on Constantius by Maximian in some one of the cities of Gaul or Italy.

The two Cæsars had every attribute of imperial power but the title of *August*, which remained with Dioclesian and Maximian. They had the tribunitian authority, the name of Emperors, that of Fathers of their Country, and of the high priesthood. Constantius, however, as noblest by birth, though adopted by the second of the Augusti, was considered the first of the two Cæsars, and on all public monuments his name, to which he had added that of *Herculeus*, was placed before that of Galerius. The anonymous author of Constantine's life, published by Valesius, writes in express terms that Constantius divorced Helena to marry Theodora, and Eutropius that Constantine was the fruit of an obscure but lawful matrimony.

<sup>2</sup> Crevier's Roman Emperors.



ment of Asia and Africa, and as prior Augustus, had supreme power over the rest of the empire; that of Maximian Hercules who governed Italy and Spain; of Galerius, who ruled Illyria, Thrace, Macedonia, and Syria; and of Constantius, who had received Gaul and Britain. The latter showed his affection for the country which had given birth to Helena and Constantine, by fixing the seat of his government at York, whither his bride and the Empress, her mother, had accompanied him.

There, while the meek and excellent Helena, with pious fortitude, was mourning in her lonely widowhood, the loss of a beloved husband, and separation from a dearly cherished son, Theodora, at the distance of a few hundred miles, enjoyed the sweet intercourse of daily association in conjugal affection, which Helena had lost, with one who could not have been known without commanding love and reverence. Constantius, indeed, never acquired that surname of "Great," which admiring ages had reserved for his son by Helena, but he certainly merited, by his public virtues, the appellation of "the Good." Apart from his selfish repudiation of Helena, he exhibited many excellent qualities, and was looked upon as the father and friend of the people.<sup>1</sup>

So mild and moderate was the Roman Cæsar in his dominion, that during the greater part of his reign tranquillity prevailed in Britain. His habits were regular, and he respected virtue. Securely resting on the affections of the people, who loved him for his own goodness, and anxiety to promote their happiness, Constantius did not consider it necessary to exhibit the pomp and ostentation of the Roman Emperors; so great an admirer was he of simplicity, that when he did give an entertainment, he borrowed of his friends plate to furnish his table: one of the sayings ascribed to him was this, "that he had rather the riches of the state should be dispersed in several hands than locked up in one coffer." Dioclesian differed in opinion from Constantius, and blamed him for levying so few taxes that his treasury was empty, observing that "a prince ought not to be poor." On which we are told that this great man sent for the richest of the inhabitants of York and informed them that he was in want of money, and should be glad if they would show their attachment by a voluntary gift. His treasury was soon filled; when Constantius remarked to the Roman envoy of Dioclesian that, "he had just collected together those things that had long been his;" adding, "I left them in the keeping of their possessors, who, as you see, have been faithful to their trust." The deputies returned to Rome filled with admiration, of not only the ruler but the people: and Constantius on his part, restored to his subjects the money they had so readily contributed for his service.<sup>2</sup>

In no particular did Constantius become more conspicuous than in his forbearance towards the Christians during the frightful persecution which signalized the reign of Dioclesian. This ancient "reign of terror" began in the family of the persecutor himself, and, sad to recount, was first instigated by a woman. The mother of Galerius had inflamed that prince against Christianity, who, in his turn, instigated Dioclesian to extirpate

<sup>1</sup> Green, Crevier, Warrington.

<sup>2</sup> Crevier.

the faith of Christ, and spread the worship of their own gods. The Emperor first ordered his wife Pisca, and Valeria, the young wife of Galerius, to assist in sacrifices made to idols. Both ladies had received the baptismal rite, and had been encouraged by their own learning and genius to seek the society of those orators and writers who explained their new faith. But they knew that if they disobeyed the command of the Emperor, whatever his assumed regard for them, they must expect to die. Love of life, weakness of faith, or easiness of temper, led them, therefore, in the end, to worship those idols their hearts refused to acknowledge; a weakness in such high examples which many readily followed, while others stood forth in defence of their faith, and, to the number of 17,000, fell victims for conscience sake. The church in Nicodemia was levelled with the ground, and the very next day an edict appeared, depriving all Christians of their rank, and of the benefit of the laws, and exposing them to torture.<sup>1</sup>

The persecution, which raged at that time, spread throughout the Roman world, two provinces alone excepted; these were Gaul and Britain, which escaped by the timely interposition of the merciful and humane Constantius.<sup>2</sup> That prince, though compelled with reluctance to demolish the Christian churches throughout his dominions,<sup>3</sup> preserved the persons of the followers of Christ from harm; yet he could not prevent some of the atrocities which marked this period of bloodshed. Among the British martyrs were Aaron and Julius, A. D. 303, and St. Alban, who are said to have suffered cruel torments: a church was afterwards raised<sup>4</sup> to the memory of each. This persecution endured for two years and two months throughout the Roman Empire, when many persons of both sexes suffered death;<sup>5</sup> it was happily terminated in A. D. 305 by Constantius becoming Emperor. To try the hearts of his courtiers, Constantius proclaimed that all those who forsook the worship of the true God, should be banished the court, and that heavy penalties and fines should be imposed upon them; thereupon, all those who were base enough to serve him only for their own views went away, forsook the true God, and worshipped idols, by which means he found out who were the true servants of God, and whom he intended to make his own, thinking rightly that such as were faithful to their God, would prove so to him.

Did the inhabitants of Britain, as some have asserted, owe this interposition of Constantius in favor of Christianity to his own belief in its doctrines, or to his recollection that it was the religion of his divorced Queen, St. Helena? We have high authority for the fact, that Constantius was distinguished for Christian piety, and had been the founder of a metropolitan see at York. Some say that Constantius had received the faith and rite of baptism in the seventh year of his empire, Pope Syl-

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<sup>1</sup> Milner.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius. Amongst others, the splendid minster of Lucius, at Westminster, was levelled to the ground at this epoch.

<sup>4</sup> In the city of Caerleon, where they were interred. A choir of nuns graced the church of Julius, and a famous order of canons that of Aaron.

<sup>5</sup> Kippis, Milner.

vester officiating in the solemn ceremony; and we are assured that it was the constant desire of Helena to advance the Christian faith, which first stimulated this Emperor to favour the Christians. If it be true that Helena was herself a professor of its doctrines prior to her divorce, it must have deeply affected the heart of Constantius to behold her, on that painful separation, so entirely resign herself by its influence to her hopeless fate. The widowed wife and childless mother had submitted to her lot in so meek and uncomplaining a manner, as to prove her just claim to the title of Christian, and her example must have had its effect. Released from the matrimonial tie, she sought not again to enter into the married state, and most probably the reflections in this season of bitter trial in the life of Helena, laid the foundation for her own future greatness as well as that of her son.

In memory of this period of suffering, the African marigold has been placed in our floral calendars on St. Helena's day, August 18th, as it is a flower betokening grief, or distress of mind, and is thus appropriately emblematical of the feelings of the deserted Empress.<sup>1</sup> There is also a sentiment attached to the blossoms of the flower called *helenium*, which resemble small suns, of a beautiful yellow colour, and is said to have been produced by "the tears of Helena."

It is not positively certain that Helena<sup>2</sup> or Constantius were Christians at this period, though there seems some foundation for the supposition. That Christianity had obtained a footing in Britain long ere this, has been shown, and that it was professed even in the family of Constantius himself is equally certain.

During the residence of the Emperor at York, the Empress Theodora had borne him six children, all of whom were educated in Britain; the sons were Dalmatius, Julius Constantius, and Annibalianus: the daughters were Constantia, Anastasia, and Eutropia. To all Constantius proved a kind and tender parent, but the first of these royal princesses, Constantia, requires some especial notice, as her after-history becomes much connected with that of Helena and her own half-brother, Constantine.

At a very early age, Constantia studied the works of Arian, and became from the first his sincere disciple, though he had not then acquired any name, and at a subsequent time she was his powerful patron. Constantia was influenced in adopting the sect of Arianism, being already a Christian, by her friend and preceptor, Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia. She was singularly steady in her opinions, once formed, nor could she be won over to those of others; but her peculiar views caused afterwards much disadvantage and inconvenience to a church which required unity

<sup>1</sup> The African marigold blossoms all the year round, and was, therefore, termed by the Romans the flower of the calends—in other words, of all the months. The flowers are said always to turn towards the sun, and to follow his course from east to west. Thus Marguerite of Navarre, the maternal grandmother of Henry IV. chose it for her device, with the motto, "*Je ne veux suivre que lui seul*," intimating that all her thoughts and affections were turned towards Heaven, as the marigold towards the sun. See "Language of Flowers."

<sup>2</sup> Baleus calls Helena the most Christian mother of Constantine, and Llyud tells us that the young prince was brought up by her in the Christian faith, which she herself professed.



in its several members for its support.<sup>1</sup> The princess was endowed with rare beauty, and possessed also "masculine courage, discretion, prudence and virtue; she had a judgment which penetrated the most solid affairs, much eloquence, and unshaken firmness and resolution, and a happy art of reconciling any differences which arose among those who surrounded her." Constantia's character and profession of faith might have caused Constantius to show leniency to the Christians, even were he not himself a believer in the sacred truths of religion.

It was not long after this cruel persecution that Constantius was called from his earthly dominions. He was seized with his last illness while occupied in an expedition against the Picts and Scots, and finding his life drawing towards its close, the Emperor's heart naturally yearned to behold the son who had been snatched from him just on his arrival at manhood. A messenger conveyed to Galerius the request of his dying colleague, that he would send home his son as soon as possible.<sup>2</sup> Galerius delayed, as long as he could, the fulfilment of this duty. For a long time past he had regarded the "son of Helena" with the eyes of a jealous rival, and, seeking his destruction, had on various occasions placed him in positions of certain peril. Constantine's life had been risked against the Sarmatians in war, but he returned victorious to Galerius, carrying with him the enemy's king as his prisoner; and the Emperor regretted the conquest which spared the British prince. On another occasion, Constantine, ardently desirous to win renown and honour, undertook, by persuasion of Galerius, to fight with a wild beast in the theatre. The spectators, in wonder, beheld the animal slain by the youthful prince; but Galerius smiled, for he meant yet further to ensnare him into danger.<sup>3</sup> At last, however, the prince perceived his aim, and resolved to escape from court to Britain, and join his father. At this juncture, the news of the dangerous illness of Constantius reached him. Surrounded by the spies of Galerius, who watched his slightest movement, he made his escape by stealth. His perils were numerous, and in order to evade pursuit and retard the speed of those who sought to overtake him in his flight, Constantine was forced to resort to the expedient of maiming at every post the horses which were not necessary for his flight—a cruel resource, yet, under his circumstances, excusable, for he was no doubt flying for his life, besides his desire to behold his dying parent.<sup>4</sup> In this way he succeeded in reaching Britain, where he arrived only a few days before his father breathed his last, and on proceeding to York, had the melancholy satisfaction of beholding once more his mother, from whom he had been so long and painfully divided.<sup>5</sup>

Constantius, during the brief interval which intervened between the arrival of Constantine and his own death, was requested to name his successor in the Empire, to which entreaty he gave the following memorable reply: "That he would have none other than the most pious Constantine," thus setting aside the claims of the children of Theodora in favour of his son by Helena, and giving a final proof of his attachment to his

<sup>1</sup> Lives of the Emperresses.

<sup>2</sup> Milner.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis.

<sup>4</sup> Gibbon calls this "a foolish story."

<sup>5</sup> Milner, Lingard.



first wife, and the legality of her union with him. His decision was received with approbation by the army, and the purple robe was thrown over the prince's shoulders, who on this occasion is said to have shed tears, and clapped spurs to his horse, to escape the importunities of all those who pressed around him to proffer the imperial dignity.<sup>1</sup> How different had been the conduct of Caracalla, another Emperor's son, on a similar occasion!

A. D. 306, Constantius died, fourteen years after he had become Cæsar, having enjoyed the dignity of Emperor the two last years of his life;<sup>2</sup> his memory was held in such esteem, that he was afterwards deified. His last mortal remains were deposited at York, in the Church of St. Helen, in Aldwark. This building stood near the walls of the city, but there are no remains in the present day. Some suppose that it was erected by Constantine on his conversion, over the remains of his father, especially as the name of St. Helen is affixed to the building. The main street, which now bears the name of Aldwark, to mark its antiquity,<sup>3</sup> was so designated by the Saxons; it adjoins St. Anthony's Hall, and the Roman Imperial Palace, described in the life of the Empress Julia, is supposed to have extended from Christ Church to this street.<sup>4</sup> Camden relates that the remains of Constantius were discovered in a vaulted tomb within a little chapel at York, and adds "on the authority of several intelligent inhabitants of that city, that when this vault, which had by tradition been marked as the place where the ashes of Constantius reposed, was opened, a lamp was found burning within it, but which was soon extinguished by the communication of the air; for it was a Roman custom to preserve lights in their sepulchres for a long time, which art they accomplished by the *oylines* of gold resolved into a liquid substance."

Helena, who had passed the prime of life, for she was now in her fifty-fourth year, in a quiet obscurity, at a distance from those whose presence would have made life so dear, was now destined to emerge from her solitude, and assume an eminent position in the vast theatre of the world. It was she who had implanted the first principles of virtue in the bosom of the great Constantine, who had set in motion all those secret springs which were to bear him onwards to glory and greatness, and she was called upon in her own person to direct the career of that victorious child.

Without ambition for herself—for that failing had never formed part of Helena's character—she had none of those vain-glorious emotions which usually animated her contemporaries; all her feelings were absorbed in one, that of ennobling the name of the beloved son who had blessed her too brief union with Constantius, and who in spite of difficulties had inherited his imperial destiny. To guard that son from the

<sup>1</sup> Leigh's Choice Observations.

<sup>2</sup> In 1283, when preparations were making for the erection of Caernarvon Castle, a body, supposed to be that of Constantius, was discovered there. King Edward gave orders that it should be honourably re-interred in the Church of St. Publicius, a descendant of the family of Helena.—Matthew, West, Pennant.

<sup>3</sup> *Ald* implies old, and *wark* a building.

<sup>4</sup> Allen's York; Milner's Church History; Green's History of Worcester.

perils of his high station, to assist him by her maternal advice, derived from the many years' experience of her own royal sway, and in her late humbler position, was the coveted duty of this exalted and estimable woman, and worthily did she acquit herself of the important office. If Helena did not witness either the arrival of her long-lost son, or the last moments of her departing Constantius, it is certain that no sooner was Constantine recognised successor to the Empire, than she repaired to the Imperial Court of York; and many places in that city and the north of England yet remain to attest by her name that there she was once present.

Theodora, her mother, and her children, were now become the guests of Constantine; they continued in the Imperial Palace, and under this painfully distressing change in their destiny, beheld nothing in the conduct of the new Emperor, or of his amiable mother, which could in any way remind them, by the smallest neglect or humiliation, of the bitter loss they had sustained. On the removal of the court from Britain, they accompanied it into Italy.

Not less difficult and trying was this sudden change of situation for Helena, than was that in which she had been divided for ever from her husband. She was now called upon daily to meet and associate, in the bonds of affection and kindness of spirit, with the widowed Empress who had supplied her place on the throne of Constantius; and to guard over and protect her and her children, as the nearest ties of one so dear to herself. This hard duty, accompanied with all the recollections of the departed Constantius, Helena achieved. She had exchanged the dignity of Queen of the Britons for the more elevated rank of Empress-Mother of Rome. The dutiful Constantine, now that he had attained the summit of grandeur, desired only to make use of his new power to serve that mother whom he had always loved and revered. He publicly testified the immense debt of gratitude he felt was due to her long-trying affection by raising her at once to all the dignities of a Roman empress. He caused her to be proclaimed Augusta in his armies, introducing her to the soldiery with more distinction than Agrippina had ever enjoyed;<sup>1</sup> Helena not having had the dignity of Augusta during the lifetime of Constantius,<sup>2</sup> it was bestowed on her by her son, as though he desired to compensate her for the deprivation of an honour by her divorce, which she had been entitled to. He likewise caused medals to be struck, bearing her effigy, with her names, Flavia Julia Helena. One of these coins has, on one side, a female standing with a branch in her right hand, and the inscription "*securitas Republicæ*," and on the other side, the words Flavia Julia Helena, round the head of the Empress.

Ancient inscriptions style Helena "*Venerabilis et pietissima Augusta*,"<sup>3</sup> and some of these give to her the imperial attributes.<sup>4</sup>

Many stones yet extant bear the attributes of Empresses given to Helena, such as "*Venerabilis Domina*," "*Clarentissima*," "*Charissima*," and "*Domina nostra*."<sup>5</sup> Besides these dignities, Constantine admitted

<sup>1</sup> Butler.

<sup>2</sup> Selden's Titles of Honour.

<sup>3</sup> Green's Worcester.

<sup>4</sup> Selden.

<sup>5</sup> Butler.

Helena to council, as Alexander Severus had formerly done his mother Mammæa; and thus was the Empress-Mother enabled to confer on her country a train of benefits almost unexampled, while the hitherto enslaved island of Britain, under its new rulers, emerged from barbarism, and began to taste the many advantages of civil and religious freedom. It was to the influence of Helena, at this period, that Britain was indebted for some of its greatest and most durable benefits; for not only had Constantine admitted her into his councils, but he gave her power to carry out all she might desire to achieve for her country, by placing her at the same time at the head of his exchequer. In doing so he paid the highest compliment to her discretion, as monetary resources were at that moment in the greatest requisition, and Helena did not act in a manner to make the Emperor regret his confidence had been so reposed.<sup>1</sup>

From the period of the death of Constantius, to that in which Maxentius was defeated near Rome by Constantine, there was an interval of six years. This period was doubtless occupied in adjusting the affairs of Gaul and Britain, over which Constantius had especially ruled.

Leland speaks of the City of London as enlarged and fortified by Constantine at the request of Helena.<sup>2</sup> The manner in which the walls were built was discovered at a later date, in laying the foundation for a new wall.<sup>3</sup> They are thus described by William Fitz Stephen, who died in 1171: "The wall of this city is high and great, continued with seven gates, which are made double, and on the north distinguished with turrets by spaces; likewise on the south, London hath been enclosed with walls and towers, but the large river of Thames, well stored with fish, and in which the tide ebbs and flows, by continuance of time hath washed, worn away, and cast down those walls."

The Saxon Chronicle confirms the fact of the existence of these walls, by saying that "in 1052, Earl Godwin, with his navy, passed along the southern side of the river, and so assailed the walls."

While these great works progressed, Constantine made every arrangement for the public security and welfare of Britain. He divided the country into five provinces, named *Britannia Prima*, *Valentia*, *Britannia Secunda*, *Flavia Cæsariensis*, and *Maxima Cæsariensis*.<sup>4</sup>

Constantine appointed that each of these five provinces should be ruled by a vicegerent, five rectors, two consulars, and three presidents; but from that time till the reign of Valentinian, no account is given of the

<sup>1</sup> Some money of Constantine is said to have been discovered in the walls of the ancient city of Allcester.—Kennet.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, Hist. of Britain.

<sup>3</sup> Stowe.

<sup>4</sup> Holinshed. The countries they comprehended were as follows:—

The 1st province, or *Britannia Prima*, the east part of England, from the Trent to the Tweed.

2nd, *Valentia*, [or *Valentina*,] the left side, from Liverpool to Cockermouth.

3rd, *Britannia Secunda*, that part of the isle which lay south, between the Trent and the Thames.

4th, *Flavia Cæsariensis*, all that country between Dover and the Severn, including Cornwall and Wales.

5th, *Maxima Cæsariensis*, or Scotland.



manner in which the government was conducted after the son of Helena quitted his native country.

In early youth Constantine had allied himself to Minervina, supposed to be a British lady, by whom he had a son named Crispus. He afterwards had espoused Fausta,<sup>1</sup> daughter of Maximian, the enemy of Christianity, a lady who was the half-sister of Theodora, the Empress of Constantius. Maximian had contracted this alliance for Fausta from motives of state policy. Twice driven from his throne by the unworthy Maxentius, his adopted son, Maximian took refuge with Constantine, who at that time was residing in the palace of Trèves.<sup>2</sup> Though the Emperor could scarcely forget a revolt which Maximian had formerly kindled against him at Marseilles, he received him with the utmost generosity and clemency. Maximian repaid this by raising a new plot against his life. He endeavoured to gain over his daughter Fausta to send away the Emperor's guards during the night, and to leave his apartment open to him. Presents, prayers, promises, and threats were employed to seduce the unhappy Empress. If she betrayed her father by a word, she knew it would be to die; if silent, her husband's life was the price at stake. At last she promised obedience to Maximian, but conjugal affection led her to discover his secret to Constantine. The Emperor could not believe his aged father-in-law capable of such treachery, and sacrificed the life of an eunuch to prove the fact. The unfortunate victim, of a class held in no esteem except as serviceable to their master, was placed on the couch of Constantine, who dismissing his guards, concealed himself in the chamber. In the dead of night, Maximian entered, and finding the passage cleared for his approach advanced to the bed, when he buried his poniard repeatedly in the slave's bosom, exclaiming, "My enemy is dead. I am master of the Empire!" The sight of Constantine changed his joy to despair; he beheld with horror the threatening countenance of his supposed victim: the day of grace was past; Constantine pardoned him not again, and he fell a sacrifice to his insatiable ambition!<sup>3</sup>

This was the first<sup>4</sup> who fell by the death-doom of one merciful by nature, but who gained sternness and severity by the circumstances of his own fortunes. In Maximian, the colleague of his late imperial father, Constantine destroyed the father-in-law of Theodora, the husband of Eutropia, the father of Fausta, and grandfather of his own sons. It seemed a horrible alternative, yet certainly no safety on a throne could have been enjoyed, had Maximian continued to exist.

<sup>1</sup> Three sons of Constantine by the Empress Fausta were afterwards placed over the provinces. Constantine, the eldest, over the Gauls, Spain, and Britain; Constans over Illyricum, Italy, and Africa; and Constantius over the East.

Constans was founder of Caer Segont, which was also called Hengaer, the old town which stood by the site of the modern Caernarvon.—*Kennett*.

<sup>2</sup> The city of Treves was honoured with the title of Augusta; it was a Roman colony, and the residence of several emperors, who had the care of superintending their possessions in Gaul.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. Universelle.

<sup>4</sup> At a later period Licinius, the husband of Constantia, his sister, and her son, were put to death by him; but the fate of Licinius was deserved, when his crimes towards the wife and daughter of Dioclesian are considered.—See Gibbon.



Perhaps this conspiracy against the life of Constantine alarmed the maternal feelings of Helena, and actuated her conduct in future towards the sons of Theodora. These three young princes, Dalmatius, Constantius, and Annibalianus, had been promoted by Constantine to the order of nobility, out of respect to their being of his family; in consequence of which they all wore a purple robe with golden guards.<sup>1</sup>

Helena, who always preserved her authority over her son, and is said to have rarely exerted it in a bad cause, showed much wisdom and prudence by the care she took to prevent the rise of these princes, brothers of Constantine, who were of noble birth by their descent from Maximian. There were no instances of the sons of Emperors remaining in a private station, and Helena feared that though in reality they had no right to the empire, which was *elective*, they might perhaps, urged by ambition or by evil counsellors, forget their allegiance to Constantine, and disturb the tranquillity of the State. The Emperor Constantius had desired that his dominions, undivided, should devolve on her own son, and the army had sanctioned his choice. Helena had no share in this arrangement, which, however, being made when the three brothers of Constantine were still minors, she resolved to maintain, and by her prudent precautions effected her purpose. She kept them always at a distance from the court and from employments, sometimes at Toulouse, at other times at Trèves, or in some other distant city, and last of all at Corinth, where she fixed their abode.<sup>2</sup> Julian the Apostate, afterwards Emperor of Rome, already alluded to as having stigmatized Helena's marriage as illegal, who was himself the descendant of Theodora, designates the conduct of Helena in this instance as "the cunning artifice of a stepmother;" but Tillemont esteems it good policy, founded on the opinion that they had no right whatever to the throne; and indeed the sequel of Constantine's family history, which will be given hereafter, proves how prudent were the precautions of Helena.

As we do not hear more of Eutropia and Theodora, it would seem not unlikely that after the death of Maximian, and the separation of these princes from the court, they quitted the palace of Constantine for the more calm retreat which their children were permitted to enjoy at a distance from the crimes and ambition which pervaded the atmosphere of the Roman State.<sup>3</sup>

At the time Constantine was proclaimed in Britain, Maxentius, son of Maximian, invaded Italy,<sup>5</sup> where he was now exercising great tyranny over the Romans in the city of the Emperors; and many of those who were exiled sought protection in Britain at the court of Constantine,

<sup>1</sup> Zosimus.

<sup>2</sup> Crevier's Hist. of the Roman Emperors.

<sup>3</sup> Helena, in quitting Britain, had, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, been accompanied by the three brothers of King Coel, her uncles, Llewelyn, Trehearne, and Marius. Llewelyn, at a subsequent period, espoused a Roman lady, by whom he became father of Maxen Wledig, or the Illustrious, of whom it will be necessary to speak in another part of this work, as the husband of Helena ap Eudda.

<sup>4</sup> Though Constantine had been made Emperor of the West, the prætorian guards had, in a tumultuary manner, declared Maxentius Augustus at Rome. [Platina.]

whom they stirred up by their representations to march to Rome and oppose the tyrant. Among other acts of oppression of which Maxentius recently had been guilty, was that of putting to death St. Katherine, a near relative of Constantine, at Alexandria, whose sacred body, adds our authority, "was miraculously carried by angels from Alexandria to Mount Sinai."

Constantine, having assembled a powerful army, marched against Maxentius. On arriving in the neighbourhood of Rome, the Emperor encamped over against the bridge Milvius, now called Ponte Mole, two miles distant from the city. The enemy's forces were superior in point of numbers, but Constantine earnestly implored the protection of the one supreme God. After his prayer, a little before noon, as he was traversing the country with a part of his army, he beheld in the sky a cross of light, with this inscription, "By this shalt thou conquer." The following night he is said to have seen our Saviour, who commanded him to make a representation of the cross which he had seen, and use it in battle. The Emperor obeyed the Divine command, and thus as early as the fourth century originated the famous banner called *Labarum*<sup>1</sup> or Standard of the Cross, which wholly displaced the ancient standard of Rome.<sup>2</sup>

Maxentius was defeated, and by the breaking of a bridge of boats, which by his own command had been thrown over the Tiber, was drowned in his flight.<sup>3</sup>

To commemorate these events, in which the heart of the Empress-Mother must have deeply shared, the senate afterwards caused a triumphal arch to be built to the honour of their pious and valiant Emperor. This arch is yet to be seen in Rome. A statue was also erected to Constantine in one of the public places of the city, where he appeared holding a large cross in his hand, instead of a lance, and by his own order the pedestal bore the following inscription:—"By this salutary sign, the true mark of courage, I have delivered you from the yoke of tyranny, and restored the senate and people of Rome to their ancient glory."<sup>4</sup>

Constantine the Great was the first who displayed a cross in a shield on the imperial arms, on his helmet, and on the shields of his soldiers.<sup>5</sup>

Whether Helena was converted to Christianity before her son,<sup>6</sup> as some

<sup>1</sup> Butler's Lives. The Roman custom of carrying a banner called *Labarum*, in Tertullian's time, in their armies, gave rise to the practice of banners being carried in public processions. The *Labarum* was worshipped both by commanders and private men. On it was painted an eagle, the ensign and the tutelary bird of the empire. From hence it is, that ensigns are called sacred in processions, and that they are saluted, and the effigies of saints of both sexes are painted thereon, because they are the patrons of parishes.—*Roma Antiqua*, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Lesly, Bishop of Ross, reports a similar story respecting Hungus, King of the Picts. He states, that the night before the battle between Athelstan, King of Northumberland, and Hungus, King of the Picts, a bright cross, in form of that whereon St. Andrew, the tutelar saint of Scotland, suffered martyrdom, appeared to Hungus; who, having gained the victory, ever after bore the figure of that cross on his banners.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, John Rous.

<sup>4</sup> Butler.

<sup>5</sup> *Clavis Calendaria*.

<sup>6</sup> St. Ambrose says that Constantine was happy in being born of such a mother

authors assert, or not till after the appearance of the miraculous cross which Constantine beheld, she received the right of baptism from the hands of Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, who on this occasion was endowed with imperial dignities which were confirmed to his descendants.

A story is on record concerning the conversion of Constantine, which states, that when the Emperor was, while in the prime of age, afflicted with the leprosy, and his recovery despaired of, Helena offered up prayers for her son's restoration to health.<sup>1</sup> Gower, who introduces this circumstance in his "*Confessio Amantis*," says that every remedy resorted to having failed the physicians of the Emperor ordered him to be bathed in the blood of children whose ages were under seven years. The necessary number of infant victims was collected, but Constantine's mercy prevailed; he grieved to think of the lives about to be sacrificed —

" By cause of him alone.  
He sawe also the greate mone,  
Of that the mothers were ungladde,  
And of the wo the children made;  
Whereof that his harte tendreth  
And such pitie within engendreth,  
That him was lever for to chese  
His own bodie for to lese,  
Than see so great a mourdre wrought  
Upon the bloude, which gilteth nought.—Book ii.

The children and their mothers were remanded home, the latter praising and blessing Constantine, and praying for his restoration to health. The Emperor, on the other hand, having no hope on earth, commended himself to God alone. The same night Peter and Paul are said to have appeared to him in his sleep, and ordered him to send to Mount Celion for Sylvester and his clergy, who would cure him of his disease; "at the same time they commended his charity towards the children."

Constantine, as on a former occasion, was obedient to the order received in his vision. Sylvester obeyed the summons with joy, and seized the opportunity to preach the faith to the master of the world. Constantine requested to be baptised, and for this purpose the same vessel was employed which had been prepared for the blood of the victims. On being immersed in the holy water, "the scales of his body fell off, till nothing remained of his great malady, his body as well as his soul being cleansed and purified."

Such is the legend: we are further informed by the poet, that the Emperor sent for his mother, "*Queen Eleyne*;" and that, by their joint persuasions and influence, the Roman people were admitted to the rite of

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as St. Helena, who found for him a divine help which filled him with courage, and placed him above the greatest perils. A truly great woman, who had it in her power to bestow on the master of the Empire something beyond all that he had already. Crevier, on the contrary, says that Helena had long been engaged in the superstitions of idolatry, and that it was by the conversion of her son that God thought proper to bring her to Christianity, which she embraced with a sincere heart and enlightened mind.

<sup>1</sup> Lewis's Hist. of Great Britain.

baptism,<sup>1</sup> "of which their most holy Empress had previously set them the example."

"This emperor, which he hath found,  
Within Rome anone let founde  
Two churches, which he did make  
For Peter and for Paul's sake;  
Of whom he had a vision,  
And yafe thereto possession  
Of lordshippe, and of worldes good."<sup>2</sup>

Platina<sup>3</sup> tells us that Constantine left Constantinople for the hot baths, for the recovery of his health;<sup>4</sup> but discredits the story of the Emperor's being afflicted with leprosy, and says, it is not mentioned by any Christian or profane author.

Whether the story was founded on fact, or not, Pope Adrian I., in after times, asserted, in support of his supremacy, that Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor, having been converted to the truth, baptised by Pope St. Sylvester, and cured of his leprosy, had, out of gratitude, when he founded his new capital, Constantinople, freely resigned Rome, and made to the Popes the absolute and eternal donation of the Sovereignty of Italy and of the Western Empire.

In the same year that Constantine vanquished Maxentius, he is said to have also bestowed on the Bishop of Rome the Imperial Lateran Palace, A. D. 312, in which, in the following year, 313, Pope Melchiades held a synod in the apartment of the Empress Fausta, wife of Constantine. It is interesting and curious to discover the Popes in possession of this edifice as early as the fourth century; and in later times to hear the famous Pope Gregory comparing Bertha, Queen of Ethelbert, the Kentish monarch, to the pious St. Helena, because, like her, she yielded up her royal abode for the service of the papal missionaries.

The baptismal font of Constantine, which was preserved in the Palace of the Lateran, having become nearly ruinous, was restored and beautified by Leo X.

"The hall of Constantine, in the Vatican, one of the last works of the immortal Raphael, was commenced under the same Pontiff (Leo X), and terminated after his death, and that of the artist, by Giulio Romano and Gian Francesio Penni. This apartment is adorned by four grand compositions, each of the series occupying one side of the chamber. The first represents the Vision of Constantine, with the miraculous appearance of the Holy Cross; the second and largest is the Victory of Constantine over Maxentius; the third, the Baptism of the Emperor; and the fourth, the Donation made by him to the Church. On the basement of this apartment are represented the figures of several of the Roman Pontiffs, who had been distinguished by superior piety; each of whom appears to be seated in a niche, and to be attended by two angels, who support his mantle, or assist in holding the book which he is employed in reading. Among them are the sainted Pontiffs, Pietro Damaso, Leo, Gregory, and

<sup>1</sup> The painting of the Baptism of Constantine, by Christoforo Roncalli, adorns the Lateran Palace.

<sup>2</sup> Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, book 2.

<sup>3</sup> And Socrates.

<sup>4</sup> Butler's *Lives*.



Sylvester. On the base of a column, at the foot of the picture which represents the baptism of Constantine, is inscribed, "CLEMENS VII, PONT. MAX. A. LEONE X. COEPTUM CONSUMAVIT."<sup>1</sup>

Constantine first beheld Rome on the occasion of his triumph over Maxentius: at that time he made some stay in the capital; but he never fixed his residence there; and from that time to the twentieth year of his reign, we always find him, by the dates of his laws, and by other historical monuments, both in war and in peace, either at Milan, at Arles, or in Illyricum, while his visits to Rome<sup>2</sup> appear to have been rare. Notwithstanding which, in that city remains are yet found which testify his affection for his excellent mother.

The ruins, also, of the private baths, built with great magnificence in Rome, for Helena's use, by her son, still bear the name of *Thermæ S. Helenæ*.<sup>3</sup> These baths, in the *Villa Ursinia*, are still among the objects of interest shown to strangers, being almost entire: they bear at the entrance the following inscription:—

"D. N. Helena Ven. Aug. Mat.  
Avia. Beatiss. . . . .  
Thermæ . . . . Istria;"

"which (says Montfaucon) we have therefore set down, because otherwise delivered by others. On the left hand going out, is the *Neustriæ* way, and on the right the *Labicane*, leading to the tomb of the Empress Helen."

Several new cities were afterwards founded by Constantine, in honour of his mother, to which he gave the name of *Helenopolis*. One of these was situated in Palestine. Another was *Drepanum*, in *Nicomedia*, which he beautified and fortified, exempting it from all taxes: this town was favoured more particularly from the regard which the Empress herself entertained for it, from the circumstance of *St. Lucian the Martyr* having been interred there; she herself assisted in commemorating the spot. "This was named *Helenopolis*, as well as other cities, in her honour, and not because she was born there, as some have erroneously supposed."<sup>4</sup> The city where *Constans* was slain was called the *City of Helena*.

The grand object of Constantine and of Helena, from the time of the victory over Maxentius, seems to have been the propagation of the Christian faith. The Empress instigated her son to piety and alms-deeds;<sup>5</sup> and after three hundred years had rolled away, under the domination of Emperors hostile to the creed of Jesus, its followers beheld one of British birth arise as a protector to the rights of their Church. They now first experienced peace and quietness, and to become a Christian was legal. Indemnity was made to those professors who had been injured, and the ministers of God were treated with honour.<sup>6</sup>

The heads of the several provinces belonging to Rome were directed to promote the Gospel; and though, like Constantius, the Emperor would not oblige them to profess Christianity, he forbade them, by their præfects, to sacrifice to idols. Even beyond the bounds of his own Empire, Con-

<sup>1</sup> Roscoe.

<sup>2</sup> Crevier.

<sup>3</sup> Butler's Lives.

<sup>4</sup> Procopius.

<sup>5</sup> Butler.

<sup>6</sup> Milner, Baleus.

stantine still sought to promote the good cause; for, in a letter to Sapor, King of Persia, he zealously pleads for the Christians of his dominions. He destroys idol temples, prohibits impious pagan rites, puts an end to the savage fights of gladiators, stands up with respectful silence to hear the sermon of Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, who furnishes him with the volumes of the Scriptures, for the use of the churches; he orders the observation of the festivals of martyrs, has prayers and reading of the Scriptures at his court, dedicates churches with great solemnity, makes Christian orations himself, one of which, of a considerable length, is preserved by the historian, his favourite bishop: directs the sacred observation of the Lord's Day, to which he adds that of Friday also, the day of Christ's Crucifixion, and teaches the soldiers of his army to pray, by a short form made for their use.<sup>1</sup>

Among other improvements, Constantine abolished the barbarous punishment of crucifixion; and from the time that the sign of the cross appeared to him in the battle against Maxentius, the cross, as a figure, began to be revered and esteemed. Theodosius afterwards made a law that no image of the cross should be graven in stone, marble, or in earth, lest men should tread on it.<sup>2</sup>

Constantine also forbade the private use of divination, though he still allowed the public use of it in baths and temples; he afterwards abolished the worst branches of sorcery and magic. Finding the idolaters still addicted to their rites, he took another step, that of publicly exposing the mysteries which had hitherto been kept secret, melted down golden statues, and caused brazen ones to be drawn by ropes through the streets of Constantinople; and some of the temples, which had been scenes of horrible wickedness, he destroyed. In Egypt the famous cubit, with which the priests were wont to measure the height of the Nile, was kept in the temple of Serapis. This, by Constantine's order, was removed to the Church of Alexandria. The pagans beheld the removal with indignation, and ventured to predict that the Nile would no longer overflow its banks. Divine Providence, however, smiled on the schemes of Constantine, and the Nile the next year overflowed the country in an uncommon degree. In this gradual manner was Paganism overturned.<sup>3</sup>

As for Helena, Rufinus calls her faith and holy zeal *incomparable*, and says she kindled the same fire in the hearts of the Romans. One of our early writers, speaking of the piety of Helena,<sup>4</sup> says, "She persevered to the end of her days, with the evangelic Anne, in holy widowhood, entirely devoted to the Christian religion." There are authors who record that it was through her that persecution ceased, and peace was restored to the Church.

<sup>1</sup> Milner's Church History. "Galerius, tormented with sufferings from an incurable disease, published an edict taking off the persecution from the Christians, and allowed them to rebuild their places of worship, desiring them to pray for his health. He expired a few days afterwards."

<sup>2</sup> Polydore Vergil.

<sup>3</sup> For many benefits conferred on the Church, Constantine was, after death, canonized by the Greeks, who keep his festival on May 21st.

<sup>4</sup> Baleus. Gregory the Great recommends her as an example to Bertha, Queen of Ethelbert.

Such an understanding of heavenly philosophy is she said to have arrived at, after a knowledge of the Gospel, that she early produced treatises—

On the Providence of God, 1 book.

On the Immortality of the Soul, 1 book.

The Rule for Right Living, 1 book. (To the ever-august lord, her son.)

Epistles to Constantine, 1 book.

Of her Revelations, 1 book.

Pious Exhortations to her son, 1 book.

To Pope Sylvester, many epistles.

To the Abbot Antonius, many epistles.<sup>1</sup>

Certain Greek Poems, 1 book.

All which are stated by Ponticus to be still extant.

Hitherto, from the period of his coming into power, nothing is recorded of Constantine that takes from the excellence of his character. But whatever virtues might exist in those times, the savage nature, yet unsubdued by a continuance of the usages of the blessed faith of Christ, would occasionally break forth, and some unexpected act of cruelty or revenge appears in history, as if to contradict the good attributed to its heroes.

This was the case in regard to Constantine, who, generally represented as just and merciful, yet committed acts which can scarcely be reconciled with such a reputation, and in these the influence of his mother appears to have been of no avail.

It would seem that, at the time when the son of Fausta was about ten years of age, Crispus, the son of Constantine by his first wife, Minervina, became the object, some writers say, of the love, some of the jealousy, of his mother-in-law. Be the cause what it might, Fausta, it appears, was bent on the destruction of the young prince, and made accusations against him to his father, which entirely embittered his mind.

It was at a grand festival in honour of the twentieth year of Constantine's reign, when the court was at Nicomedia, that in the midst of enjoyment, and unsuspecting of evil, Crispus and several of his friends were arrested, carried away to judgment, and after a brief examination by persons already instructed to find them guilty, they were condemned, some to death, others to banishment, which was to end in the same punishment. Crispus was sent to Pola, in Istria, where he was soon after put to death.<sup>2</sup>

The vengeance of Fausta was now satisfied, and the stern justice of Constantine executed; but Helena's affliction knew no bounds at so severe and unlooked-for an act, and she felt convinced, not only that the prince was innocent of the intention to conspire against his father, of which he was publicly accused, but that he had secret enemies, who ought to be brought to light, and receive the reward of their crime.

In her endeavours to discover these, revelations of a character for which

<sup>1</sup> Anthony, the holy hermit, who is described as a man "wrapped wholly in contemplation," was by birth an Egyptian. [John Rous.] His manner of living was severe, his food being bread alone, and water his beverage; his single meal in the day was taken at sunset. This man did much to reform mankind in Constantine's reign, and Helena oftentimes, both by letter and messengers, recommended herself and her sons to his prayers. [Platina.]

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon.

she was not prepared, were made, by which Constantine became aware of the infidelity of the Empress Fausta herself, to whose representations he had yielded, and had sacrificed his son. Rage and jealousy now took possession of his mind, and without waiting for more proofs of the frailty of his wife, he determined that her life should pay the forfeit of her treachery.

It is recorded that Fausta met her death in the bath, in which she was suffocated by the steam, "it having been heated to an extraordinary degree."<sup>1</sup>

Helena heard of this second act of retribution with feelings of deep regret and sorrow, and is said to have, in her character of his mother, reproved the Emperor with great severity for his cruelty in both instances: and this is recorded to have been the sole occasion on which a difference ever existed between her and her son. The accusations and the vengeance were both common to the times, and frightful as the facts are, the loss of human life did not affect the world as it does in more civilized days; otherwise it is difficult to find excuses for Constantine, who is accused by some authors of more than one act of cruelty irreconcilable with his boasted clemency. Considering his profession of the new faith, and his opposition to the old, he had doubtless sufficient enemies ready to blacken his character, whenever there was a possibility of misrepresenting the truth. This may also account for the accusations which have been made against Helena herself, of having been the accuser of Fausta, and the instigator of her son's vengeance against his wife.

The death of Licinius is another stain cast on the fame of Constantine, who, having condemned him as an accomplice in the designs of Crispus, affected to listen to the prayers of his agonised sister, and appeared to consent to his banishment to Thessalonica; but he was, soon after his arrival there, murdered by the imperial order.

Helena, after the catastrophe of their mother's death, took upon herself the education of the children of Fausta.

About A. D. 325 happened one of the most interesting events in Church history—the Council of Nice. It is not certain that Helena was present on this remarkable occasion; but, as her son presided at the assembly, it is very likely that she did so likewise, for she generally not only accompanied him wherever he went, but sat in council, and aided him with her wisdom and experience.

Helena is thus described, when, at the advanced age of eighty, she undertook an expedition surprising at her years: "Her life was constantly happy, at least after the elevation of her son to the throne of the Cæsars. She saw that only son reunite under his power the whole extent of the Roman dominion, and three grandsons seemed to promise her that the Empire would be perpetuated in her posterity. Add to this, perfect health, and an unimpaired vigour of mind, preserved even in her old age. So many prosperities were not to her, as they too often prove, a means of seduction, but, on the contrary, an inexhaustible fund of *grateful acknowledgment and piety towards God*."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon.

<sup>2</sup> Crevier.



The great enterprise for which, more than any other action in her life, Helena has been celebrated, was a journey into the East, for the express purpose of discovering the true cross on which our Saviour had suffered. This grand undertaking was made at the distance of more than three hundred years from the Christian era, and attests the exalted piety of the Empress. Some say she desired to adorn the churches and oratories in those sacred spots, noticed in the history of our blessed Lord, and to relieve the poor<sup>1</sup> of those parts; others, that visions, admonitions in sleep, or divine warnings, had led to the design which drew Helena to the Holy Land; and St. Paulinus declares no worldly motive could have directed her steps; it was the pious one alone of discovering the true cross. A letter from Constantine was dispatched to Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, ordering him to make search for the sacred relic on Mount Golgotha of Calvary. Tradition had pointed out the spot where it was to be found, and it is said that Helena had been favoured with an especial revelation to aid her search.

Accordingly, the aged Empress set forth, attended by an imperial retinue, and at the head of a large army, taken for that purpose out of Britain;<sup>2</sup> whence some have derived her surname of "Lueddog," Elen Lueddog, signifying "Elen with the *great army*."

The desire of Helena to admit her own countrymen to a share in this great and glorious enterprise is highly interesting; for it shows that in her honoured position of Roman Empress she still remembered that she was Queen of the Britons. The Emperor himself accompanied her as far as Byzantium.

On her arrival at Jerusalem, Helena is said to have convened a large assembly of Jews, of whom she requested information concerning the spot of which she was in search. They refused to point it out; upon which Helena threatened to put them to death.<sup>3</sup> On hearing this, they reluctantly confessed that Judas—an ominous name—one of their number, could give the necessary information. This man, however, who was really acquainted with the place, was as resolute as his brethren; and it was not till after he had passed several days without food in a dry cistern or pit, where he had been placed by order of Helena, that hunger conquered his resolution, and he made known the secret, by leading the impatient Empress to the spot.<sup>4</sup> When arrived there, the search was by no means easy. The Emperor Adrian, who had delighted in the profanation of those sacred places, had, about 200 years before, buried under great heaps of earth the place where the holy sepulchre existed, not far distant from the spot of the crucifixion, and had built upon a platform over the place, which was paved with stone, a temple to Venus, while above the sepulchre he had raised a statue of Jupiter.

It was necessary to remove the whole of this edifice, and afterwards to clear away the mass of stones on which it rested, as a preliminary step to the necessary discovery; this done, they had to dig very deep to discover the former surface. No difficulties could, however, deter Helena

<sup>1</sup> Rufinus, John Baleus.

<sup>2</sup> Caxton says by *fire*.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis's Hist. of Great Britain.

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius, Caxton.

from accomplishing her pious object. After a vast quantity of earth had been removed, and all the rubbish of the buildings they had demolished, the sacred grot was discovered wherein the Lord's body had rested,<sup>1</sup> and whence it had arisen in a glorified state.

After they had dug a little deeper still, they discovered three crosses; and here a new and unexpected difficulty arose—for they could not determine which of these crosses was the one that had borne the Saviour of Man. The superscription was indeed found, but it was not attached to any one of them. Judas could not tell the Queen which was the true cross, and Macarius suggested that a miraculous proof should be demanded of God concerning its identity. The Empress, the bishop, and others, therefore, went to the house of a lady of quality, who was very ill, in the city. On arriving there, the Empress having herself made a prayer aloud,<sup>2</sup> the bishop applied the crosses, and the sick person was restored instantly at the touch of the true cross. Many historians relate this as a fact; and add that, by touching it, a dead person also was restored to life. According to Caxton, Judas had laid the three crosses in the middle of the city, and while there awaiting some demonstration from God, at about noon a young man's body was carried forth to burial. Judas detained the bier, and laid on it first one of the three crosses, then a second, and after that a third, when the dead was restored to life. Sozomen relates this incident, as he tells us, from report only; and Mr. Butler says it deserves little credit. Some, indeed, consider the whole story of the *Inventio Crucis*, or Finding of the Cross by Helena, as a mere fiction; and Salmasius, in his "*Treatise de Cruce*," p. 296, endeavours to prove it such, on account of the supposed inscription; "for where was the necessity of a miracle for distinguishing the cross on which our Saviour suffered, from those of the malefactors, if the above-mentioned inscription was found near it; as it would plainly appear, from the hole and nails, which of the crosses it had been affixed to, though even the two other malefactors, as is probable, had their inscriptions."<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, however, mentions indirectly the discovery of the cross, in the letter of Constantine addressed to Macarius about building the church, and describes the two magnificent churches which Helena built, the one on Calvary, the other on Mount Olivet;<sup>4</sup> it is therefore, no refutation of these historians, though perhaps some embellishment may have been added to the main facts.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Caxton.

<sup>2</sup> This prayer is recorded by Rufinus, *Hist. lib. x., cap. 8.*

<sup>3</sup> Keysler's Travels.

<sup>4</sup> Butler.

<sup>5</sup> Polydore Vergil, who relates the fact of Helena's finding the three crosses, says, "it was easy to perceive Christ's cross by the title which then did remain, albeit sore wasted and corrupted with antiquity."

Judas is said to have possessed a family memorial of 326 years' standing, naming the place which Helena desired to discover, which document he presented to the Empress, and thus the cross was found. Subsequently Judas, who was a Hebrew, received the baptismal rite, and the name of Queriacus was bestowed on him by Helena; he lived to become a bishop, and suffered martyrdom. The Romans appointed a festival in his honour on the 3rd of May, which was subsequently called Holy Cross Day.

Platina tells us the cross was discovered by Helena on the 3rd of May, during the Pontificate of Eusebius, but the calendar appended to Cooper's account of

The Empress, who had presided in person over the whole work, was overwhelmed with joy at finding herself in possession of such a treasure; she cut the sacred cross into two pieces, the largest of which was enclosed in a rich silver shrine, and placed under the care of Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem; it was afterwards annually exposed to the adoration of the people, sometimes oftener, in proportion to the number of pilgrims who resorted thither to worship it. The second portion of the cross was sent as a present of inestimable value to Constantine, who was at Constantinople, and there, at certain periods, it was uncovered and exposed to the adoration of the public with much solemnity. Fragments, as is well known, of this cross have been dispersed all over Christendom.

About three hundred and fifty years after the discovery of the cross, an Anglo-Saxon nun wrote the description of a journey of pilgrimage made by two of her countrymen<sup>1</sup> in the eighth century, who travelled to the Holy Land through Asia Minor. After tracing their progress, the writer, who was of the monastery of Heidenham, says: "And then they came to Jerusalem, by that place where the Holy Cross of our Lord was found. There is now a church in this place, called the Place of Cavalry; but St. Helen, when she discovered it, enclosed it within the boundaries of Jerusalem; and there stand three wooden crosses, in front of the east court of the church, near the wall. These are not within the church, but withoutside, under a covering; and there is that garden, near where the sepulchre of our Lord was. This sepulchre was cut in the rock, and that rock stands upon the ground; it is four-square within, and narrow towards the top; and the cross of that sepulchre stands now upon the top; and there beside is built an admirable house; and on the east side, in that rock, is the door of the sepulchre, by which men enter into it to pray; and there is the bed where the body of the Lord lay; and there stand about the bed fifteen golden basins of oil, burning day and night; that bed is on the northern side, within the sepulchre, and is on the right hand of the man as he goes in to pray there. And there, before the door of the sepulchre lieth a great stone, like to that which the angel rolled away."

Such is one of the earliest accounts of the sacred edifice which was erected over the spot of our Lord's Sepulchre,<sup>2</sup> where part of the cross found by St. Helena was deposited. The splendour is said to have rivalled that of Heliogabalus's Temple of the Sun, "its walls being lined with precious marbles, its roof covered with beaten gold, while in the shower of light which fell upon its dome, Helena affected to image and perpetuate the angelic glory to which the fane was dedicated."<sup>3</sup>

A modern writer<sup>4</sup> describes the building in these terms: "The form

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the most important Public Records of Great Britain (vol. ii. p. 489), fixes the date on the 3rd of May, A. D. 326, in the twenty-first year of Constantine's reign, the thirteenth of the Pontificate of Sylvester, and the first after the Council of Nice.—*Butler*, vol. v., p. 564.

<sup>1</sup> St. Willebald and St. Wunibald. See Miss Lawrence's interesting work, *History of Woman in England*.

<sup>2</sup> Milner's *Hist. of the Church of Christ*.

<sup>3</sup> Lady Morgan.

<sup>4</sup> Light's *Travels in Egypt, Nubia, the Holy Land, and Cyprus*.



of the body of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is circular, over which is a heavy cupola. In the body of the church are entrances to the three chapels of the Greeks, Armenians, and Latins, and to the cells of the monks, who are kept there for the service of the church. The chapels are fitted up in the style of the sect to which they belong; the Greeks and Armenians with pictures, the Latins with images. In the centre rises an oblong building of wood, of twenty feet in length by ten in breadth, in which is a cupola, open at top. One half of this contains the Sepulchre of our Saviour, the other is fitted up for the chapel of the Copts. A small space enclosed by low railings surrounds the entrance to the Sepulchre. I confess I had been prepared to see something like a tomb, and was rather disappointed, on entering, to find myself in a mean chapel, where the altar, of plain white marble, occupied a space of six feet in length, two in breadth, and in depth about two feet and a half, leaving only room in front fit to kneel. It covers, according to the tradition of the place, the tomb of our Saviour, of whom a miserable picture is hung on the tapestry over the altar; this is lighted by forty-five silver lamps, suspended in six rows from the cupola. I followed the example of my guide in kissing the altar, kneeling and bowing my head over it.

"From the Sepulchre, I was led to a flat stone of six feet in length, and three in breadth, forming part of the pavement of the body of the church where our Saviour's body was anointed after it was taken from the cross; near which were the tombs of Godfrey and Baldwin, two of the sovereigns of Jerusalem during the Crusades. They are now enclosed, and concealed from view within the wall, their existence and appearance not being interesting to the Armenians, who new modelled the church.

"The attempt to bring everything connected with the crucifixion of our Saviour under the same roof, surprised me. In one part of the church is an elevated piece of rock, enclosed in a sort of chapel, in which the crucifixion took place; three small square pieces of marble, in the centre of which is a pole, mark the spot where the crosses of our Saviour and the malefactors were fixed; and in another, close to this, is a chapel, dedicated to the place where the ceremony of nailing to the cross was performed; underneath is an excavation, where St. Helena found the cross; and a little further off is the tomb of Nicodemus the Jew, who is mentioned in St. John, chapter iii.; but by what authority he is buried here I do not know. To complete the show, a fragment of a granite column, about two feet high, said to be taken from the palace of Pontius Pilate, and described as the pillar to which our Saviour was attached when he was scourged, is placed in another chapel. But I will not tire the reader by dwelling longer on the relics of this church, which are made the objects of contention between the different sects, and are by turns possessed, as each has money to purchase the right to them from the Turkish chiefs, who of course are anxious that such contests should occur."

Mr. Light, seeing the anxiety to crowd all the relics of the Saviour under one roof, the Sepulchre in particular being so near the place of crucifixion, doubts whether it was the actual burying-place of our Lord, and thinks that the early Christians, from their zeal, neglected to examine among the tombs further from the city for the real Sepulchre. He



says :—In the Valley of Jehosophat there are caverns which have evidently been tombs, many of them with a stone portal, and bear marks of great antiquity. The text in Scripture says, the stone was rolled away, which certainly applies more to a vertical than a horizontal position, the supposed situation of the present tomb, and is contrary to the custom prevalent of burying the dead in tombs excavated in the sides of rocks, of which memorials are to be found in all parts of the East. As I made these observations before I read Dr. Clarke's account of Jerusalem, I was much gratified in finding his opinion coincide with mine."

The same author goes on to observe :—"Within the limits of the Aga's seraglio or palace are said to be the place of confinement and judgment-hall of our Saviour, the spot where he was scourged, and that in which the cross was kept before it was used for the crucifixion, and where it was left by the Empress Helena after she found it on Mount Calvary."

Helena, likewise, was desirous to evince her piety by monuments, raised in the several other places rendered sacred by our Lord's sufferings. She destroyed at Bethlehem the Temple of Adonis, by which Adrian had, about a hundred years before, profaned the place where Christ was born, and raised instead, a church to the incarnate Son of God. She built another upon the Mount of Olives, on the spot where our Saviour ended his abode on earth by his glorious ascension. In both these works she was assisted by the liberality of her son, but she had the first share in the design and execution of them.<sup>1</sup>

The lamented author of the "Crescent and the Cross"<sup>2</sup> thus describes his visit to the Church of St. Helena, at Bethlehem :—"Entering by a very low door and long passage, almost upon hands and knees, I stood up under the noble dome of the Church of St. Helena. The roof, constructed of cedar-wood from Lebanon, is supported by forty huge marble pillars, showing dimly the faded images of painted saints. The whole

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<sup>1</sup> Both these edifices are described by the early Saxon writer of the Life of St. Willebald, in the eighth century, as having been seen by that bishop, who, when he visited the Mount of Olives, "came to the church on that mount from which our Lord ascended into heaven. And in the midst of the church stands a plate of brass beautifully wrought, and it is square. This is in the midst of the church, on the place where our Lord ascended into heaven; and in the middle court is a quadrangle, and there are little glass lamps, and round about these lamps is glass to enclose them. And this is why they are enclosed, that they may keep alight both in rain and sunshine. This church is, moreover, very broad, and without a roof, and there stand two pillars just withinside the church, against the northern and the southern walls. These are in remembrance of the two men who said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?' And that man who can pass between the wall and the columns, they say he is free from his sins.

"Then he went to the place where the angels appeared to the shepherds, and then to Bethlehem, where our Lord was born. This place was formerly a cave, and now it is a house, cut four-square in the rock, and the earth is dug away round about, and a church is now built over it. And on the place where the Lord was born now stands an altar, and another smaller altar is there, and when they celebrate mass in the cave, they take that smaller altar and carry it within. This church, which stands above, is built in the form of a cross, and it is a glorious building."

<sup>2</sup> Eliot Warburton.

building is silent, dirty, and neglected-looking, but of noble proportions. From its court are parted off the different chapels belonging to the rival sects. The Armenian is the handsomest and wealthiest of these, as its friars are by far the most respectable.

“The Chapel of the Nativity is a subterranean grotto, into which you descend in darkness, that gives way to the softened light of many silver lamps suspended from the roof. Notwithstanding the improbability of this being the actual place of the Nativity, one cannot descend with indifference into the enclosure, which has led so many millions of pilgrims, in rags or armour, during 1800 years, from their distant homes. It is, however, impossible to recognise anything like a reality in the mass of marble, brass, and silken tawdry ornaments; and one leaves this most celebrated spot in the world with feelings of disappointment.”

Mr. Turner is still more minute; these are his words: “I descended a staircase and entered a grotto, said to be the site of the stable in which our Saviour was born; it lies east south-east, and west north-west, and is thirty-seven feet six inches long, and fourteen broad. At the easterly end, on the supposed site of the birth, is built an altar, six feet three inches long, and fifty-eight feet six inches deep, formerly belonging (as indeed did the whole church) to the Catholics, but now usurped by the Greeks, with whom the Armenians have lately bought a share. This altar, lying north north-east, and south south-west, is above, adorned with mosaic, laid by Helena, but now ruined, and with Greek pictures of saints, &c., and lighted with fourteen silver lamps, belonging to its present possessors. The grotto, *i. e.*, the whole, is lighted by twenty-six silver and silver-gilt lamps, the property of the Catholics. To the west-south-west of the site of the birth, fourteen feet distant (in which are included three steps, cut from the naked rock), is another altar (lying north by east and south by west, and contained in an interior grotto), the site, it is said, of the manger in which our Saviour was laid: this altar is fifty inches long, and thirty-five and a half deep. To the east south-east of the manger, five feet six inches distant, is another altar, supposed to be on the spot where stood the Magi, when they offered their gifts to Jesus. Both these are hung with appropriate pictures; and the one on the site of the manger is lighted by five silver lamps. This interior grotto measured seven feet ten inches, by eight feet nine inches, and is embellished by four small columns standing near the supposed site of the manger, one of verd antique, one of pink, and two of white marble; these were also placed by St. Helena. At the westerly end of the church is a door leading to a large natural cave, in which is shown, first, from the door to the right, an altar, covering, it is said, the spot where Joseph retired to pray, after the delivery of the Virgin; second, to the right, an altar, where are thought to have been buried the Innocents murdered by command of Herod; under it is a large hollow; third, turning into a passage on the left, an altar upon the sepulchre of St. Eusebius; fourth, in the same passage, an altar upon the sepulchre of Santa Paola and her daughter; opposite to which, fifth, an altar on the sepulchre of St. Jerome; and sixth, turning to the right, a chamber, said to have been the tomb where St. Jerome taught. The only thing belonging to the

Greeks and Armenians here below, is the altar, on the site of the birth ; under this is a small hole, which they have embellished with a silver plate, for the pilgrims to kiss.”<sup>1</sup>

It appears from St. Ambrose, that Helena was, out of contempt, called *Stabularia* by the Jews and Pagans, not as Baronius thinks, because Constantius lodged at the house of her father in *Britain*, but because she herself founded this Church at Bethlehem where the stable stood in which Christ was born, and which the enemies of the Christian name turned into ridicule. St. Ambrose writes thus of her: “They say she was first a *stabularia*, or one who entertained strangers, and so became known to Constantius, who afterwards arrived at the Empire. A good *stabularia*, who sought so diligently the crib of the Lord ; who chose to be reputed as dung, that she might gain Christ !” This commentary might also have referred to another grand work of Helena, which was a kitchen for the support of the indigent and hungry poor at Jerusalem.

In this manner Helena directed the State revenues which her son had placed in her hands to the purposes of religion and benevolence. Paulinus, Epist. XI. ad Severum, reproaches the Empress-Mother with abusing the exchequer ; but Fuller,<sup>2</sup> who refers to this charge against Helena, thinks that the word “*abuti*” should be rendered, “a full and free use of those treasures” her son had employed her to distribute.

Saint Paulinus<sup>3</sup> writes of the discovery of the cross through the zeal of the Empress Helena, and lavishes praises on the faith of Constantine. The epistle which he addressed on this subject to Sulpicius Severus is edifying, for it gives a just idea of the mother’s piety, and the religion of the young prince, her son : —

“I am persuaded that it is not out of season that I inform you how the cross has been found, and recognized, to edify your faith by the history of an event which is too important for one to be ignorant of. It is easy to see, that he who knows not the detail, would with difficulty understand how this cross, which has been discovered by revelation, was the true one, on which the Lord willingly expired for us ; but it cannot be doubted that if it had fallen into the hands of the Jews, who are always watching to weaken the faith of Jesus Christ, they would have torn it to pieces, and reduced it to ashes. For those who had sealed the Sepulchre would not have failed to destroy the remembrance of it, and they would not have suffered the preservation of the cross to afford an excuse for worshipping Him whose resurrection they would not acknowledge, though attested by the opening of the tomb, and the uselessness of the seals they had placed upon it to hinder the rising from the dead which they apprehended. It is, therefore, in vain that we demand why the cross remained buried in the earth, since, if it had not been so, above all during the time of the persecutions, which have succeeded to the hatred of the Jews, and almost surpassed their cruelty, it is evident that all the remains would have been entirely destroyed ; for one may easily imagine with what fury those per-

<sup>1</sup> Turner’s Tour in the Levant.

<sup>2</sup> Worthies of England, vol. i. p. 500, edit. 1840.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop of Nola.



sons would have destroyed the cross, who have expended their violence on the place where it had been deposited. The Emperor Adrian thought that by despoiling this sacred spot, he would succeed in undermining and extirpating the faith of the Christians: with this view he decorated a statue of Jupiter in the place where Christ died, and Bethlehem was in like manner profaned by the impure Temple of Adonis. He hoped, so to speak, to pluck up the Church by the root, and to shake it from the foundation, if idols became adored on the spot where Jesus Christ was born to suffer, suffered to rise again, rose again to reign, and was judged by the world, that in his turn he might judge the world. Alas! it has pleased the all-powerful God to expose himself to these outrages, and even to permit profanation of sacrilegious men in the spot where he was crucified for the salvation of the human race. Over the cross, which had shaken all nature with earthquakes, by the eclipse of the sun, and by the dead rising from their graves, the idol of the Devil was raised; his altar smoked with the funeral pile of the beasts which were sacrificed to him; the name of God was conveyed to dead images, while He who is the living God, and the resurrection of the dead, was loaded with opprobrium, and blasphemed as a man who was dead, and dead by the shameful punishment of the cross. In Bethlehem, where two animals had recognised their master, and the manger of their Lord, men, disowning their Saviour and their God, have paid a superstitious worship to the infamous love of mortals, and to dead bodies. That place in which wise men from the distant climate of Chaldea had adored the Eternal King, whose cradle had been revealed to them by a new star, and had offered their presents, had the Romans rendered sacred to impure and barbarous passions. In that spot where, during the night, lighted by the star, the shepherds, accompanied by a multitude of angels, and transported by a celestial joy, repaired to render homage to the new-born Saviour, impure females, amidst effeminate men, have wept for the death of Adonis, and the grief of Venus. Alas! what piety may be able to expiate such prodigious impiety! In the place where the sacred tears of the Saviour's infancy had been heard, shameful ceremonies retain the cries of those who utter the lamentable complaints of Venus.

"This shame to the age lasted till the time of Constantine, which touches our own. This prince merited to be the model and Chief of Christian princes, by his own faith and that of his mother Helena, who, by Divine inspiration, when this circumstance was made known to her, sighed for the happiness of beholding Jerusalem; and being proclaimed August with her son, besought him to give her permission to visit the places made holy by the traces of our Lord, and by the mysteries which He had wrought for us. She desired by the destruction of temples and sacrilegious idols, to purge these holy places from the contagion of impiety, and to restore them to their original holiness; for it was necessary that the Church should resume its rights, and recover its first lustre in that place where it had received its birth. The Emperor did not hesitate to consent to all that she wished, and his august mother devoted the treasures with which she had been entrusted by him, in lavishing on the pious works which she projected every richness that could be withdrawn



thence. It was with all the grandeur and magnificence which depended on herself, and which religion required, that she adorned noble churches in every place where her Divine Redeemer had accomplished the healing mysteries of mercy.

"Helena desired, in these magnificent works, to pay to Christ the homage of an Empress; but she did not, at the same time, omit to perform those works of mercy and goodness, which are more pleasing in the eyes of God than any temples wrought with hands. It was her delight to relieve the poor, the orphans, and widows, by her charity; and as she travelled from place to place through the Holy Land, and more intimately surveyed the spots on which she desired to erect monuments to mark the glory of the Lord, and her own pious zeal in His service, she left in the hearts of all, abundant testimonies to her own vital religion. Helena especially honoured those virgins who were consecrated to God; and having one day assembled all who resided at Jerusalem, she gave them an entertainment, at which she waited on them herself."

Suidas, who notices this humility of mind and Christian modesty in the Empress of the Roman world, towards women of the monastic order, says: "She often assembled, and seated, and ministered to them with her own hands, setting before them the victuals, and handing the cups, and pouring water over their hands, so performing the part and office of a maid-servant."

"She loved simplicity; and in the common prayers of the faithful, she mixed with the other women, without taking any particular or distinguished place. She visited the principal churches of the East, and left, wherever she went, proofs of her Christian and religious liberality; nor did she pass by the chapels of the meanest towns, where her delicate sense of humility led her to appear amongst the women at prayer in a most humble garment. She was able to indulge her pious charity in these respects, because the Emperor, her son, confiding in her prudence, gave her leave to draw upon the imperial treasury for whatever sums she pleased."<sup>1</sup> Whilst, therefore, "Helena travelled all over the East with royal pomp and magnificence, she heaped all kinds of favours both on cities and private persons, particularly on soldiers, the poor, the naked, and those who were condemned to the mines, distributing money, garments, &c., and freeing many from oppression, chains, and banishment."<sup>2</sup> By these and a thousand other actions, Helena proved herself the "common mother of the indigent and distressed."<sup>3</sup> "She herself built more churches than any woman before her time or since,<sup>4</sup> to say nothing of those numerous edifices of another kind, suggested by her benevolence."

Of this latter class was the kitchen founded at Jerusalem by the Empress, thus described by Mr. Turner: "We visited the kitchen of St. Helena, which is a large edifice, well built of yellowish marble, and having its two doors adorned after the Gothic fashion. It is still used by the Turks for the purpose for which it was originally instituted, being

<sup>1</sup> Crevier.

<sup>2</sup> Butler's Lives.

<sup>3</sup> St. Gregory the Great.

<sup>4</sup> Green's Worcester.

a kitchen endowed by the Sultan for the benefit of the poor, and of Turkish travellers. The Turks have divided it into several apartments, of which some are ovens, some stables; and above they have built a mosque and a bath."

The Church of the Ascension, which stands on the loftiest of the three summits of the Mount of Olives, in the centre of the village of Mount Olivet, on the very spot whence our Saviour is thought to have ascended to heaven, was built, it is said, by St. Helena, and, says Warburton, "from the roof may be obtained the most interesting, if not the most striking, view in the world." The holy spot whereon our Lord is supposed to have stood, was enclosed by the Empress with an octagonal building, roofed by a round dome. "On each side of this building, except where is the door, are two small columns (fourteen in all) of coarse marble, with highly ornamented capitals. The circle of the inside was sixteen feet two inches round, and the dome about thirty-five feet high from the ground. Within is a stone, thirty-one inches by twenty-one, said to have been the last earthly substance that Jesus trod on. This stone contained an impression, which, says tradition, is the print of Jesus' foot. A higher authority,<sup>1</sup> however, says, our Saviour ascended from Bethany. Near the stone is a recess (to make which the symmetry of the building is spoiled, and a parcel of stones are heaped up to cover it on the outside) for the Turks and Arabs to pray in. All the pilgrims kiss the stone very devoutly. Of the court in which the building stands, each side is about one hundred feet, but the shape is irregular. Here the Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, and Copts, have each an altar (the Armenians have two) of stones, rudely piled,<sup>2</sup> of the Mosque of Omar. In the kitchen, which has a small dome, supported by four square clumsy columns, are some of the original caldrons of Helena, of which, one of the largest that I measured, was fifty inches round, and thirty inches deep. A mituctee, or superintendent, is sometimes sent from Constantinople, to honour a distinguished visitor here: she has a residence in the kitchen, and takes care that the guest be well provided: in this case the poor are neglected, as the fund is eaten up by the numerous attendants that always accompany a distinguished Turk."<sup>3</sup>

It must be interesting to the generous friends of the poor and needy, who in our own days have fed the hungry and clothed the naked, in similar institutions, to revert to the primary institution founded on this principle in a remote age in that Holy City which, in religious interest, exceeds every other in the earth. Nor was this the only other embellishment added by Helena to the churches she had already founded; for, about one hundred paces south-east of the Holy Sepulchre stands the convent of St. Peter, also the work of the Empress. It is now in the possession of the Turks, who have converted it into a tanner's yard and stables; several broken pieces of columns are attached to the walls.

<sup>1</sup> Luke, chap. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> The village itself stands on the summit of a mountain, and commands a complete view of Jerusalem, from which it is about twenty minutes' distance.—*Turner*.

<sup>3</sup> *Turner's Tour*.

Scarcely a spot celebrated in Scripture passed unregarded by the observant and pious Helena: churches arose in all directions, convents adorned the desolate places dedicated to the service of Christ: Nazareth, Bethlehem, Arimathea, testify the zeal of the Empress in her holy undertaking. The finest convent in the Holy Land, that at Nazareth, was erected by her orders, and is thus described: "The church of this convent is very large and handsome: there is a grotto under it, to which visitors descend by a handsome marble staircase: it was there, they say, that the angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin. The natural ceiling of the grotto is left; but a very handsome altar of sculptured marble is built in it; and there are still seen two columns of granite, placed, it is said, by Helena, to mark the spot; of one of which the lower part is broken off, so that it is upheld by, and hangs from, the stone roof, which is here looked on as miraculous. Out of the grotto, a short passage leads into a small cave, said to have been the kitchen of the Virgin."<sup>1</sup>

Of the convent of St. Catharine, at Bethlehem, Dr. Wittman writes:—"As we approached the convent, in which we were received with great hospitality, we passed beneath the ruins of an ancient gateway, and afterwards entered a lofty building, erected by St. Helena, anciently styled the Temple, but now the Convent of St. Catharine. It is ornamented with at least fifty lofty and beautiful columns of marble, of the Corinthian order, and has on its walls the remains of several fine paintings in fresco of Scriptural subjects, representing the apostles, patriarchs, &c. The beauty and symmetry of the Temple have been in some measure destroyed, by a portion of it, which they have converted into a chapel, having been divided off by the Greeks, who received permission from the Turks to do so, on their consenting to pay an annual contribution."

"Ramla," says the same traveller, "the ancient Arimathea, was the seat of government in the theocratic days of Israel; here Samuel judged the people, and here the elders of the Hebrews assembled to demand a king to rule over them." Here St. Helena, having gathered the bones of the martyrs out of the marshes, and placed them in coffins, built over them a church called the Church of the Forty Martyrs. Light, who visited the subterraneous Church of the Holy Martyrs, says, "the ruin may be dated from the time of the Crusades. Close to this there is a large reservoir, which is ascribed to St. Helena, the roof being supported by arches and pillars of the Gothic or Saracenic architecture, the length being not less than one hundred feet, and the breadth forty."

Among other foundations ascribed to Helena, are the Convent of St. Tecla, in the island of Cyprus, and the Convent of Santa Croce, built on the summit of the ancient Mount Olympus: the latter is said to have been small, but built with great solidity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Turner's Tour.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Turner says: Under it are subterraneous chambers, of which three have been opened, and found to contain rich priestly habits; of these the Turks took possession; there remains a fourth unopened, of which the priests conceal their knowledge till they shall find an opportunity of opening it unknown to their tyrants. The door of the convent is guarded by a portcullis; the church is small and mean. I found it full of about one hundred and fifty Greek peasants, who were bowing and praying to a cloth, on which was embroidered a cross."



When the idea of searching for the cross first inspired the Empress, she is said to have exclaimed, "I behold Calvary, I behold the field of battle—but where are the spoils and the trophies? I seek the standard of salvation without its being displayed to my view! I am elevated on a throne, and the cross of my Saviour lies buried under a dunghill! I see myself amidst a superb court, and the triumph of the Son of God is buried in ruins! How can I believe that I have been redeemed, if I do not behold the victory of my Redeemer?"<sup>1</sup> Her glorious enterprise was indeed achieved, and when the precious relic of the Divine nature upon earth was presented to her enraptured view, she worshipped, not indeed the senseless wood, but Him who had suffered upon it. Yet this very circumstance led to a result on which the pious Empress had not counted—no other than the worship of relics—a superstitious observance which has continued ever since to prevail wherever the Romish faith has prevailed. The first originator, then, of the material worship which so essentially characterises the Roman Catholic, in contradistinction to the real Christian or Protestant faith, was the unconscious mother of Constantine. Before her time, no cross was ever venerated by the followers of our Lord, nor were material objects combined with the principles of the Christian faith. The apostles, the primitive fathers of the Church, the martyrs of Dioclesian, had alone the true God before their eyes; but now a new object of interest arose, and a new tradition attached importance, solemnity, and honour, to places and things; to the former, as the abodes of our Lord on earth, to the latter as relics rendered sacred by His touch.

The portion of the cross, forwarded to Rome, was divided into portions, each of which was destined to form the foundation for some new edifice, dedicated to Christianity. Over these sacred relics was built, amongst others, the magnificent edifice of St. Peter at Rome. The possession of a portion of the Holy Cross was esteemed in itself sufficient to render any spot sacred and hallowed. Spires and domes arose in countless numbers to testify the fact. Other relics besides were found to be peculiarly sacred; the garments of the apostles, the bones of departed saints, began to acquire value in the Christian mind. The belief which could not attain by faith to a spiritual knowledge of the facts of the redemption, was forward in recognising and receiving objects known and attested by their connexion with the Divinity and His followers.<sup>2</sup>

To the great influence of Helena was also to be attributed the removal by Constantine of the court from Rome to Byzantium, where the Emperor founded for himself a new capital, which, from his own name, derived that of Constantinopolis, or "the city of Constantine." The more

<sup>1</sup> Ambrose, Theodoret.

<sup>2</sup> An order of the Cross (or Croisade), consisting of ladies only, was instituted in 1668 by the Empress Eleanora de Gonzagua, a namesake of the mother of Constantine, and wife of the Emperor Leopold, on the occasion of the miraculous recovery of a little golden cross, wherein were enclosed two pieces of the true cross, out of the ashes of part of the palace: though the fire had burnt the case wherein it was enclosed, and melted the crystal, the wood had remained untouched by the devouring element! — *Ency. Brit.*



immediate vicinity of this city to the localities which the Empress-Mother desired to adorn with edifices for Christian worship, was the main object in her view, and the Emperor seconded the design, under the impression that they might by fixing their residence there, more easily direct the persons employed to carry out their mutual enterprise. In the end, however, the removal of the court to so distant a spot produced the ruin of the Roman Empire, by diverting the strength of the heart of the government to so remote a portion. It is singular enough that the renowned city of Constantinople, first chiefly re-edified and ennobled by Constantine, son of Helena, should at last have been lost, and bereft of all Christian religion, by an Emperor called Constantine, whose mother also bore the name of Helena, A.D. 1460.<sup>1</sup>

The mother of Constantine the Great visited Constantinople the same year that the cross was discovered, A.D. 326. In that new capital of the world the Empress "founded temples exceeding in splendour, if not in beauty, the antique monuments of pagan worship, and strangely contrasting with the chill catacombs and subterraneous crypts of the early congregations of Christians. The first church raised by Constantine, under the influence of Helena, was dedicated to the Divine Wisdom, clothed in a female form, under the invocation of St. Sophia. Even the foundation of the imperial city itself was ascribed to the inspiration of the Virgin Mary, who was chosen its tutelary guardian."<sup>2</sup>

Among other decorations of the Forum itself, there were, according to Suidas, "two columns of Helena and Constantine, with a cross between them, having the inscription 'Unus Sanctus,' 'there is One Holy.'"

The fame of Christianity spread far and wide, amidst all the external honors paid to the faith; and as Helena, with her splendid train of Roman and British followers, progressed through the East from place to place, great multitudes of converts, amongst whom were illustrious Indians, Iberians and Armenians, and many others of a meaner sort, received the baptismal rite, and swelled the imperial train.<sup>3</sup>

During the period that Constantinople was re-edified, Constantine resided at Nicomedia, surnamed "The Beautiful," the capital city of Bithynia, which, for greatness and magnificence, has been compared to Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria.<sup>4</sup> Thither Helena repaired, to join her son, as soon as she had accomplished her designs in the East, carrying with her the precious testimonials of her pious search. On arriving, she related to the Emperor how she had discovered the holy cross, and by what prodigy it had been distinguished from those found with it, and also the superscription which had been separated from the cross. The Emperor was deeply affected, and still more so when his mother presented to him some of the sacred nails used by the Jews in the crucifixion of

<sup>1</sup> Stowe. "In 1472, on the 27th of May, when Mahomet II., Prince of the Turks, took Constantinople, he beheaded the Christian Emperor, Constantine, and, putting his head on the top of a lance, caused it to be borne with derision through the Turkish camp. At the taking of the city there was also a horrible tempest of thunder and lightning, which buried about eight hundred houses."

<sup>2</sup> Lady Morgan.

<sup>3</sup> Suidas.

<sup>4</sup> Lemprière.

our Lord.<sup>1</sup> For scarcely had that precious cross, which Helena prized more than all the riches of the Roman Empire, at length been placed in her possession, than she remembered that she had not the nails, and had accordingly sent to desire Judas to search for them likewise. He obeyed the order, and after having dug in the earth for some time, is said to have found them shining as gold, and to have borne them to the Empress, who, on beholding them, worshipped them with great reverence. One of these nails she put into a bridle for the horse her son rode upon,<sup>2</sup> and another she reserved for the helmet he was accustomed to wear in battle;<sup>3</sup> for both her affection and piety united in the hope that these sacred relics would preserve her beloved Constantine uninjured from his foes.<sup>4</sup>

The iron rim, which formerly adorned the helmet of the Roman Emperor, and was made from one of the nails used in the crucifixion, is still in existence. It is about three-eighths of an inch broad, and a tenth of an inch thick, and constitutes the most important part of the famous iron crown of Lombardy, with which the Emperor Napoleon Buonaparte in modern times caused himself to be invested at his coronation; being attached to the inside of it all round. Upwards of 1500 years have passed away since this crown was presented to Constantine by his mother, and, says an intelligent writer, "there is not a speck of rust upon it; which I was desired to notice as a permanent miracle, by the chanoine who called my attention to that fact. The crown itself consists of a broad circle of gold, set with large rubies, emeralds, and sapphires, and is kept in the Cathedral of Monza, over an altar, closely shut up within folding doors of gilt brass. This exhibition is attended with some ceremony, and the cross is not usually taken down from its elevated position to gratify curiosity by a nearer view; but we were more fortunate. The crown is kept in an octagonal aperture in the centre of the cross; it is composed of six equal pieces of beaten gold, joined together by close hinges; and the jewels of embossed gold ornaments are set in a ground of blue and gold enamel; which, to me, was interesting, as it exhibited an exact resemblance to the workmanship of the enamelled part of a gold ornament now in the Ashmolean Museum, which once belonged to King Alfred, and is the most curious piece of antiquity in that museum."

Constantine the Great, at the beginning of his reign, wore the simple laurel and radiant crowns used by his predecessors in the Empire, but was the first Roman Emperor who made use of the diadem of pearls and rich stones; and the fashion, not only of the crown, but of the coronation of Constantine, was afterwards followed by the rest of the monarchs of Europe.<sup>5</sup>

St. Gregory of Tours assures us that the third of these sacred nails

<sup>1</sup> Platina's Lives of the Popes.

<sup>2</sup> One of the nails Constantine made into a horse's bit, which he used in battle.—*Platina*.

<sup>3</sup> St. Ambrose. Caxton's Golden Legend.

<sup>4</sup> Burton's Rome

<sup>5</sup> Selden's Titles of Honour.

was thrown into the Adriatic by the Empress herself,<sup>1</sup> during a storm (perhaps on her homeward passage, as we are told she conveyed the holy treasure herself to her son), in consequence of which the sailors entered on that sea, as sanctified, with fastings, prayers and singing hymns, even to his own day.<sup>2</sup>

Two more of the precious nails are noticed by a modern writer, of which one was to be found in the Treasury of St. Mark at Venice, and the other in the church of the Benedictine Monastery at Catania: the latter, by its miraculous powers, prevented the destruction of that edifice in the overwhelming eruption of *Ætna* in the year 1669, when the lava flowed all round the monastery, and left it standing amidst liquid fire unhurt!

Amongst the bridal offerings presented by Hugh the Great, son of the King of France, to Athelstan, the English monarch, on the occasion of his soliciting the hand of the Princess Edilda, daughter of Edward the Elder, for his wife, was the sword of Constantine the Great, whose name, as that of its former possessor, was inscribed upon it in letters of gold; and upon its pommel, rising up above the rich plates of gold, was to be seen one of the four nails of the crucifixion. That one of the nails did fall into the hands of the French King, is a fact recorded by Burton;<sup>3</sup> and we are told that when Hugh presented this famous sword to King Athelstan, it was accompanied by other sacred relics—a portion of the true cross enclosed in crystal, and a fragment of the crown of thorns; which last precious memorials were presented by the English monarch to the Abbey of Malmesbury.

Helena, having first built a church upon the ground where the cross was found, *returned* and brought the nails with which our Saviour's body was fastened, as a present to her son.<sup>4</sup>

The cross which Helena conveyed to Rome on her return, was placed in a silver case set with gold and precious stones,<sup>5</sup> and was deposited in the Sessorian Church,<sup>6</sup> or rather in the edifice sometimes so called, because it stood upon the site, or to speak more properly, near a great building named *Il Sessorio*, the Temple of Venus and Cupid. This pagan edifice was destroyed by the pious Constantine on the occasion of his founding the Church of Santa Croce, and the remains of the structure are yet visible as you enter the vineyard near the church. Santa Croce is one of the seven principal churches of Rome, and situated within the walls of the city, upon the top of Mount Esquiline.<sup>7</sup> At the time it was built by Constantine, that part of Rome was much more inhabited than in the present day, as is evident from the adjacent ruins. "It now stands quite alone, with no buildings near it, amidst groves, gardens and vineyards; and the number of mouldering ornaments and tottering arches that surround it, give it a solemn and affecting appearance. It is remarkable for the antiquity of its shape."<sup>8</sup>

This church, built by Constantine at the express request of Helena,

<sup>1</sup> Or her son,—Platina, from Ambrose.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, *Platina*.

<sup>4</sup> Platina's *Lives of the Popes*.

<sup>7</sup> Burton, *Roman Itinerary*.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiquities of Rome*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Burton.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



derived its name of "Santa Croce" from the circumstance of the Empress herself depositing in it some pieces of the holy cross and a part of the earth taken from Mount Calvary; some of the latter was placed under the church, and the rest over the roof.<sup>1</sup> Here also were deposited two of the thorns, one of the thirty pieces of silver, a part of the cross of the *Good Thief*, one of the nails used at the crucifixion, and the superscription on the cross in Hebrew, Greek and Latin; the latter, which was in red letters and much damaged, was as follows:—

"HIESVS NAZARENVS REX IYDAEOR."

This last relic was discovered in A.D. 1492, during the Pontificate of Innocent VIII, in a little leaden chest, where it had been concealed above one thousand years.

Without more minutely describing the interior of this beautiful church, suffice it to say, that by a door or gate you descend to the Chapel of St. Helena, into which no female is permitted to enter except on the 20th of March, which is the anniversary festival of the consecration of the church, and then no men are admitted. The ceremony of the consecration of Santa Croce was performed by Pope Sylvester.<sup>2</sup>

Constantine erected many other churches:<sup>3</sup> one of these was dedicated to the two martyrs, "St. Marcellinus the Presbyter and St. Peter the Exorcist, and stood in the Via Labicana."<sup>4</sup> He built a church to St. Paul, and also another to St. Peter, which last stood not far from the heathen temple of Apollo, and was erected at the instigation of St. Sylvester. This famous person had been banished by the tyrants, but when Constantine favoured Christianity, he left Mount Soracte, whither he had retired, and came to Rome, where he obtained great influence with Con-

<sup>1</sup> Keyser, Eustace, Burton.

<sup>2</sup> It was in the year 1601, when Rubens was staying at Rome, that he executed a commission he had received from the Archduke Albert to paint three pictures for the Church of Santa Croce di Gierusalemme, connected with which he had formerly borne the cardinal's hat. One of these pictures represented the *Finding of the Cross*, and the others, the Crucifixion, and the Crowning with Thorns. These pictures, which were very remarkable as specimens of the style of painting of this great master in the art at that period of his career, were brought to England in 1811, and sold the following year by auction. [Noel's Translation of the Life of Rubens.] The Crucifixion afterwards, on its way by sea to Count Woronzow, at St. Petersburg, was unhappily lost. Rubens painted twelve pictures, representing events from the history of Constantine, formerly in the Orleans Gallery, but now scattered through different private collections in England, several of which display great beauties. "These sketches—for they are not finished pictures—were brought to England with the Flemish portion of the Orleans Gallery, in 1792. The history of this grand acquisition, the dangers encountered by the purchaser, a Mr. Slade, and the artifices to which he had recourse in their removal; the indignation and threats of the French painters, crowding round the packages, and in despair to see this rich collection carried out of their country, would form a striking chapter in the biography of pictures. The twelve sketches of the history of Constantine were valued, as a series, at £1000; but no one having come forward to purchase them, they were unfortunately, we must allow, dispersed among various purchasers, and brought double the sum."—*Mrs Jamison's Notes on the Life of Rubens*.

<sup>3</sup> Milner.

<sup>4</sup> Platina.



stantine. He was made Bishop, A.D. 314, as successor to St. Melchisedech.

"The Constantinian Church," called the Lateran, was also built and richly endowed by Constantine.

These churches, like those in the East, were distinguished for their holy relics. One, that of St. Giacomo Scossa Cavalli, is said to have derived its name from the following circumstance. A cart-load of relics, among which was the stone designed for the sacrifice of Isaac, another on which Christ stood when among the doctors in the Temple, some holy earth which had been brought from Jerusalem, and even, it is said, some drops of the blood of our Saviour, were despatched from the church of Santa Croce di Gierusalemme to that of St. Peter; when stopping at this spot, neither whipping nor any other means could induce the horses to go a step further. Accordingly the occurrence was considered a divine intimation, and the whole of the relics were deposited on the spot.<sup>1</sup>

In the Church of St. Peter in Vinculo, at Rome, are said to be the identical chains which bound St. Peter, both at Rome and at Jerusalem: at the latter city, St. Helena found a relic of the chain by which she judged St. Peter had been fastened, and therefore determined to offer it to the Pope, who possessed another fragment. It was received by him with much pomp and solemnity, and it is said that the identity was proved by the two chains uniting of their own accord when brought in sight of each other!

Pope Julius II. (A.D. 1503-1513) pulled down half of the Old Church of St. Peter's at Rome, and laid the foundation-stone of the new edifice himself. It was built on the plan of Michael Angelo.<sup>2</sup> Of the dome of this celebrated building, built under Pope Sixtus V., the following particulars are interesting, inasmuch as they commemorate our heroine, the Empress. It is said of the great artist, Michael Angelo, that having heard some one praise the Rotunda as an unparalleled work, he observed "that he would not only build a dome equally large, but build it in the air." He made good his assertion: the honour of the undertaking and design of the dome at St. Peter's is due to him. This amazing structure rests on four pillars, of ninety palmi in diameter, each of which is adorned with a white marble statue, twenty-two palmi high, without the pedestal. The first is St. Veronica, by Francesca Mochi; the second is St. Helena, by Andrea Bolgi; the third, St. Andrew, by Du Quesne; and the fourth, St. Longinus,<sup>3</sup> by Bernini, who also designed these orna-

<sup>1</sup> Keysler's Travels.

<sup>2</sup> Roscoe's Leo the Tenth.

<sup>3</sup> The sacred lance, which pierced our Saviour's side, was formerly preserved with the statue of Longinus, but it is now kept in the general repository for relics over the figure of St. Veronica. It is said that St. Helena discovered the iron of the lance. It was subsequently divided into two parts: the point was kept in the imperial palace at Constantinople, the other division in the Church of St. John of the Rock. It seems to be uncertain whether the division was made by Constantine II., who wished to give the point to Charlemagne; or whether Baldwin, while he was King of Constantinople, pawned it to the Venetians, from whom it was recovered by St. Louis, King of France. However, in 1492, Bajazet II., Sultan of Constantinople, sent the part which did not contain the point, as a present to Innocent VIII.; a bribe to induce him not to protect his brother Zezim, who dis-

ments.<sup>1</sup> Over each of these four statues is a fine tribune, or gallery, from whence, several times in the year, the relics, which are kept in a particular chapel, are exposed to public view.

In the vaults under the pedestals of each of the four statues an altar is erected, on which the history of the saint whose statue stands over it is represented in mosaic-work, by Fabio Christofore, from the designs of the famous Andrea Sacchi. Under these four altars are steps leading down to the other subterraneous vaults, which are full of excellent mosaic, that being the only work which could be proof against the dampness of the place. This mosaic-work was formerly the pavement of the whole Church of St. Peter.<sup>2</sup>

It has been objected that two out of the four principal niches in this church, those which are formed in the vast piles that support the dome, and which of course face the altar, should be appropriated by saints whose very names exist only in a legendary tale, viz., Saints Veronica and Longinus, while a third is devoted to St. Helena, whose statue, though she was a princess of great virtue and eminent piety, might stand with more propriety in the porch near the statue of her son; for in the early ages of Christianity the honour of being deposited within the church was reserved to martyrs, and Constantine had merely requested to be allowed to lie in the porch of the Basilica of the Apostles, which he had himself erected in Constantinople. On this account it is thought that the statues of apostles, the principal martyrs, doctors, and bishops, should alone have been admitted into St. Peter's Church. Eustace remarks that

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puted the throne. The Pope sent a solemn embassy to receive it, and for a long time it was preserved in the Vatican. In 1500 it was placed in a magnificent chapel, where was the statue of Longinus; but when this chapel was destroyed by Julius II. it was removed to the case of St. Veronica, where it has remained ever since. Benedict XIV., in one of his works, assures us, that while he was canon of this Basilica, he had the exact measure of the point sent him from the Chapel Royal at Paris; and that, after comparing the two together, they corresponded so exactly that no manner of doubt could remain as to the identity of the two relics. These relics were exhibited on Good Friday and other days. No one is allowed to visit the place where they are kept, unless he has the rank of a canon. And those sovereigns or illustrious persons who have sought this privilege have first the honorary dignity of canon conferred upon them. — Burton's Antiquities of Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Bernini, by the niches he made in the pillars for the above-mentioned four statues, and especially by the stairs along the foundations of the pillars, for going down into the vaults, or *Sacra Grotte*, was censured for having weakened the foundations to a great degree, and soon after a cleft discovered itself in the cupola, occasioned by a violent clap of thunder. Bernini was near losing his head for this unlucky accident, but saved it by his success in removing and erecting the obelisk in the Piazza Navona. Michael Angelo, the designer of this dome, was apprehensive of such an accident; and earnestly desired that these four pillars, with their foundations, should not be in the least altered or meddled with. In the year 1700 this cleft in the cupola was widened by an earthquake. [Keysler's Travels.] The four supports of the dome of St. Peter's Church are about 240 feet in circumference, and 178 in height. Each of the four has two niches in front, one above the other. In the lower ones are statues of saints, and some of the most precious relics are preserved in them. St. Veronica has her veil or sudarium, St. Helena has part of the true cross.—*Burton*.

<sup>2</sup> Keysler.

“the pictures, or rather the mosaics which have been substituted in the place of the original pictures, may be objected to on the same ground as the statues, as many of them represent persons and events totally unconnected with the sacred records, and sometimes not to be met with even in the annals of authentic history.” The candid and judicious Erasmus would have the subjects of all the pictures exhibited in churches taken exclusively from the Holy Scriptures, while the histories of saints, when authentic, he thinks might furnish decorations for porticos, halls, and cloisters; had this advice been followed, many useless, some absurd, and a few profane representations might have been banished from the sacred place.

Shortly after her return from Palestine, Helena was taken ill. “The Empress, perceiving her last hour approach, gave her son excellent instructions concerning the government of his empire, and the manner in which he should regulate his own affairs and those of his family, both temporal and eternal. She commended to his care the legacies which she had made to virgins, and to the Church, as well as certain institutions for poor persons and widows, and the rewards which she was desirous of making her servants and the army, in proportion to their merits and the time they had been in her service. As for the territories she possessed in the Eastern and Western Empire, she bestowed them all on the young Cæsar, the child of Constantine, who himself remained seated near her, kissing her hands, and bathing them with his tears. She was more afflicted with the sorrowful necessity of quitting him, than with the approach of death; and, collecting all her remaining strength, she gave him final advice, worthy of a mother and of a Christian princess. When she had communicated all her wishes for his august family and for the empire, she spoke no more, except to supplicate mercy from God: at length, in the midst of the consolations of her faith, full of hope and merit, she departed, to receive in heaven a crown more glorious than that of which death had deprived her.”<sup>1</sup>

The spot where Helena expired was, according to some writers, Nicomedia, by other accounts Constantinople, and some fix it at Rome. There is no division as to the day of her death, which is admitted to have been August 18th; but there is a difference of opinion as to the date, some thinking she died in the same year the cross was discovered, others making it one year or two years later. Thus, A. D. 326 is given by some as the date, A. D. 327 by others, and A. D. 328 by the rest.

If in 326 this event is fixed, it was the eightieth year of the Empress’ age, and the twentieth of her son Constantine’s reign.

“Constantine, anxious to pay to the last mortal remains of his mother, that respect which he had never refused her during her life,<sup>2</sup> caused the mournful ceremony of her funeral to be performed with extraordinary pomp and magnificence. By his orders, a porphyry vase, said to be the

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<sup>1</sup> Butler.

<sup>2</sup> Constantine paid to his dying mother, “as he had always done, every duty of filial piety. His tenderness and respect for so worthy a mother, is one of the finest traits of this prince’s life.”—*Crevier*.



largest and richest in the world, was made, to contain, not only the ashes, but the whole body of this princess. This vase or urn consisted of one entire piece of porphyry, and the carvings upon it represented a lion and horsemen, with various other figures in bas-relief, without any heathenish emblems, these ornaments being in a middle taste of architecture, resembling those on the triumphal arch of her son Constantine. According to Crevier, the body of St. Helena, having been enclosed in this splendid urn, was conveyed by Constantine's directions to Rome, to be deposited in the tomb of the Emperors, within the walls of the city, and magnificent fêtes were held in Rome for the space of three months upon this mournful occasion. Constantine, afterwards thinking that a monument to her own memory alone would be more worthy of this excellent parent, erected a round building outside the city, to receive her honoured remains. This splendid mausoleum was situated near the road to Pales-trina, on the Via Lavicana, about three miles from Rome.

According to Nicephorus and others, Helena's body was removed, two years after, from this mausoleum to Constantinople, and buried there; and Constantine, afterwards dying in Nicomedia, was interred with her. In the pretty Church of the Panthenorator, at Constantinople, may be seen the tombs of Constantine and St. Helena, each raised about eight feet high on a column, the summit terminating in a point cut into four sides, in the fashion of a diamond. "While Constantinople was in the power of the Venetians, they took the body of St. Helena from its tomb, and carried it to Venice, where it is now preserved entire. They attempted the same thing with the body of Constantine, but did not succeed: the two tombs are of red jasper, and to this day two broken parts are to be seen on that of Constantine, where they made the attempt."<sup>1</sup>

As, however, Nicephorus did not live till the fourteenth century, later historians have preferred believing the Torre Pignattara, at Rome, to be the tomb of this famous Empress;<sup>2</sup> and Bower, in his History of the Popes, tells us that this costly sepulchre, made by Constantine, had been plundered by thieves in the time of Innocent II. (A. D. 1143), and the body carried off by them from its tomb. An earlier account places the removal of Helena's body from Rome in 849: yet are the remains of the Empress even to this day worshipped in the Church of the Franciscans at Rome, called Ara Coeli, where they are said to repose in a rich shrine of porphyry, under the high altar, as related by several authors,<sup>3</sup> though no record exists of the truth of this assertion. Pope Anastasius IV. found the porphyry sarcophagus,<sup>4</sup> said to have contained Helena's remains, and "which, being dug up under Torre Pignattara, was damaged in several places. The Pope removed it to the Lateran Church, intending it for his own tomb, for he was a regular canon of that church. At his death, Anastasius was buried in the Lateran, in this tomb of porphyry: another account says, the Pope was disappointed of his intention, and that it has remained empty ever since. The ruins of the vast mausoleum of St.

<sup>1</sup> Travels of La Broquière, translated by Johnnes.

<sup>2</sup> Burton's Rome: Keysler.

<sup>3</sup> Keysler, Butler.

<sup>4</sup> Bower's Hist. of the Popes.



Helena were cleared by Pope Urban VIII. (1644), the structure having been much damaged by the barbarians. This Pope, desirous to preserve the memory of Helena, caused a chapel to be erected there, which he consigned to the protection of St. John de Lateran. From the Church of San Giovanni Laterano, the splendid urn is said to have been removed to its present resting-place, the Vatican Museum, by Pope Pius VI.: it rests there in the Sala a Croce Greca, with the Sarcophagus of St. Constantia, the daughter of her rival Theodora, the second wife of Constantius.<sup>1</sup>

In the year 1095, Notkar, Abbot of Hautvilliers, in the diocese of Rheims, wrote a history of the translation of the relics of St. Helena from Rome to that abbey, which was performed in 849, previous to the spoliation of her sepulchre by thieves. That author gives an authentic account of several miracles, wrought through the intercession of the saint, of some of which he testifies himself to have been an eye-witness, and the rest he learnt from the persons on whom they had been performed.<sup>2</sup> Part of this work, which Mr. Butler assures us is well written, was published by the Messieurs de Ste. Marthe and by Mabillon, and almost the whole is inserted by the Bollandists in their great work. The entire MS. copy is preserved at Hautvilliers, with an appendix, written by the same author, containing an account of two other miracles performed by the relics of this saint.

“In 1095,<sup>3</sup> Stephen of Blois and Adela, daughter of King William the Conqueror, with several members of the noble House of Blois, attended the religious festival of the removal of St. Helena’s honoured remains to a place which had been prepared for them in the neighbourhood of Hautvilliers. The ceremony took place, October 28th, 1095, on the festival of St. Simon and St. Jude. Notkar, Abbot of Hautvilliers, who presided on this occasion, and was the original suggester of that posthumous honour to the sainted Empress, thus describes the pageant: “At last the long-desired day arrived, and fell on a Sunday; all the great lights of the monastic order attended, with many archbishops and bishops; and of the secular powers were present Earl Stephen and Adela, his wife, Constance, daughter of Philip, King of France, wife of Hugh, Earl of Treves, Stephen’s brother, with many others, respectable in their way, whom I shall not here enumerate. Not only France, but even Lorraine, delighted to send her pious sons to the obsequies of such a queen; for how should not all Christianity applaud her to whom all are so greatly indebted! There is a certain place, in prospect of all Hautvilliers, called by the inhabitants Montescola, where, on the high brow of a hill, a promontory stretches out into a convenient flat, fit for the reception of such venerated limbs. Here a tent was erected, large enough to accommodate the Earl and Countess, with their family, and all those of the sacred

<sup>1</sup> The present state of Torre Pignattara, as described by a traveller of our own times, is a small church, and a still smaller dwelling for the priest who has the care of the church, both being enclosed in a round circular brick wall of very bad architecture.

<sup>2</sup> Butler.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

order. A consultation was then held as to what hour of the day the ceremony should take place, and we agreed that it should be after the mystery of the Holy Resurrection had been celebrated by Hugh, Bishop of Soissons; this being over, brethren of proper gravity were selected, who carried the relics of so glorious dust to the appointed place of interment, where the golden urn was opened, and enclosed with the bones was found this writing: 'Corpus Sanctæ Helenæ Reginae, matris Constantini, sine capite. The body of St. Helena the Queen, the mother of Constantine, saving the head.' The sacred pledges were then deposited in another vase and re-interred, &c." The noblest person there present, Earl Stephen, who as highest in rank, was appointed to present the offering at the tomb; and he still further gratified the monks of Hautvilliers, by granting them some valuable privileges and immunities. Many miracles were said to be afterwards wrought at this tomb, which became no small source of gain to the Monastery of Hautvilliers.<sup>1</sup>

After the death of Helena,<sup>2</sup> Constantine showed a particular kindness to Constantia, the daughter of Theodora. This princess, after the deaths of her husband and son, accepted an invitation to her brother's court, where she had first shared in the influence of Helena over the Emperor, and subsequently, during the absence of the Empress-Mother in the East, had filled her place near his person. After death had deprived Constantine of his much-cherished parent, Constantia acquired an entire ascendancy over her brother. Constantine also raised the brothers of Constantia, and their children, in dignity at this period; and the event proved how much more advantageous had been the previous severity of Helena, even to the princes themselves, than the indulgence of the Emperor; for by raising them, he gave umbrage to his own sons, who were no sooner in possession of the kingdom by his death, than they ruthlessly massacred their uncles and cousins.<sup>3</sup>

The Arians of this period owed their protection to Constantia's influence with the Emperor, which she exerted as much as possible to ameliorate their sufferings. Arius, the founder of the sect had been excommunicated, and forbidden to enter Alexandria. The Princess afterwards was instrumental in procuring his recall, through the instrumentality of one of his followers, a priest, supposed to have been Acacius, who succeeded Eusebius of Cæsarea. This personage insinuated himself into the Princess' confidence, and at length succeeded in making her believe that the disgrace of Arius had been brought about by his bishop's malice, through envy at the esteem in which he was held by the people, and that he was not tainted with the belief for which he had been condemned by the Council of Nice. Constantia adopted his views very forcibly, but dared not address Constantine on the subject. At last being seized with a severe illness, in which she feared her death approaching, she desired

<sup>1</sup> Lives of the Princesses of England, by Mary Anne Everett Green.

<sup>2</sup> "After Helena's death, Constantine erected to her honoured memory, in the middle of a great square in Constantinople, her own statue and his, with a large cross in the middle. He likewise erected her statue at Daphne, near Antioch, and several other places in Italy."—*Butler*.

<sup>3</sup> Crevier.

the Emperor, as her last request, to admit the priest to his favour, whom she had honoured with her own friendship, and listen to his conversation in matters of religion; adding, that she feared his government would receive a fatal shock from the persecution and banishment of innocent people. Constantine, who was tenderly attached to his sister, promised to attend to her request, and admitted the priest from that time into his confidence; who so effectually worked upon the Emperor's mind, that he secured the recall of Arius from exile; who, after making a written declaration of his faith, conformable to the doctrines laid down in the Council of Nice, and swearing it to be his true belief, was again received by Constantine into the Christian Church.<sup>1</sup>

The Church of St. Constantia at Rome is situated near that of St. Agnes (without the Porta Pia, or Nomentana): it was formerly the Mausoleum of the Princess Constantia, and at a period still earlier than that, a temple of Bacchus. "The tomb of this British princess, or rather the temple in which she was interred, is of circular form, supported by a row of coupled columns, and crowned with a dome. Behind the pillars runs a gallery, the vaulted roof of which is encrusted with ancient mosaics, representing little genii playing with clusters of grapes, amidst the winding tendrils of the vine. The tomb of the saint, a vast porphyry vase, ornamented with various figures, once stood in a large niche, directly opposite the door; but as the body had been deposited many years ago under the altar, the sarcophagus was transported to the Museum of the Vatican. The *Sala a Croce Greca*, in the Vatican, containing the above relic of antiquity, is supported by columns, and paved with ancient mosaic: it is furnished with statues, and lined with bassi-relievi.

"Both the removal of the sarcophagus and the placing the body of the Princess as a saint under the altar of the mausoleum, then converted into a church, were performed by orders of Pope Alexander the Fourth.

"The sarcophagus of St. Constantia, formed with its lid of one block of red porphyry, is beautifully ornamented in basso-relievo, with little infant Cupids employed in the vintage, and bordered with tendrils and arabasques,—an appropriate device for the locality to which the last remains of Constantia were consigned by her brother,—the Temple of Bacchus, and where for ages they remained undisturbed."<sup>2</sup>

St. Helena<sup>3</sup> was canonized for the great act of bringing the true cross from Jerusalem to Italy.

"Herself in person went to seek that sacred cross,  
Whereon our Saviour died; which found, as it was sought,  
From Salem unto Rome triumphantly she brought."

*Drayton's Poly Olbion.*

The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated by the

<sup>1</sup> History of the Arians.

<sup>2</sup> Eustace's Tour.

<sup>3</sup> The Greeks venerate Constantine and Helena together on the 21st of May. In the old style Holy Rood Day was celebrated on the 26th of September. The day of the death of the Empress has received the name of St. Helen's Day. The Church of Rome has ranked this pious princess among her saints, and celebrates her festival by an express service.



Roman Church<sup>1</sup> on the 14th of September, and also at Jerusalem by the Greeks and Latins as early as the year 335. The first occasion of this festival was the miraculous appearance of the cross to Constantine, and the subsequent discovery of that sacred wood by the Empress-Mother, St. Helena.<sup>2</sup> The 14th of September is called Holyrood Day. In former times every church had its rood-loft, which was a gallery across the nave, at the entrance of the chancel of the church, on which the holy rood or cross, when perfectly made, had the image of our Saviour extended with that of the Virgin Mary and St. John on each side. This representation alluded to a passage in St. John (chapter xix. v. 26), Christ on the Cross saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by. This was called the rood, and it was placed over the screen which divided the nave from the chancel of our churches, and conveyed to our ancestors a full type of the Christian Church. The Church militant was represented by the nave, the Church triumphant by the chancel, intimating that all who would go from the one to the other, must pass under the rood, or in other words, carry the cross and suffer affliction. Instances of the rood may be seen in Norwich and Winchester Cathedrals.

That in Norwich Cathedral was erected by Bishop Hart. It is at present the organ loft, on which was erected the principal rood or cross: beneath it was situated Holyrood Chapel, in which Jesus' mass was sung once every week.

To the Chapel of the Sepulchre, in Winchester Cathedral, which is a dark chapel below the organ stairs, there used formerly to be great resort in Holy Week, to witness the Mass of the Passion of our Saviour, as yet celebrated in the Roman churches on the Continent. On the walls of this chapel are discovered rude paintings of the taking down from the cross, the lying in the sepulchre, the descent into limbus, and the appearance of our Lord to Mary Magdalen, from whose lips the word "Rabboni" is seen to proceed, with kindred subjects.

Since the 8th century the festival of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross has been removed by the Latin church to the 3d of May, which is called Holy Cross Day, or the Day of the Invention of the Cross; it being

<sup>1</sup> In the year 642, Heraclitus restored to Mount Calvary the true cross, which had been carried off, fourteen years before, by Cosroes, King of Persia, upon his taking Jerusalem from the Emperor Phocas; in memory of this event the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross was afterwards held on the 14th of September.—*Ency. Brit.*

<sup>2</sup> The ecclesiastical emblems with which St. Helena is represented are these; she is crowned, with a large cross in her arms, of a tall stature, and she is also occasionally depicted with a beard, and tied to the cross. S. Borgia de Cruce Veliternâ, c. 27, &c. At the foot of the Velitern Cross, beneath the figure of our Lord, is a circular compartment, with a half-figure of a woman, having a nimbus round the head, the hair curled, and adorned with a band, as if of pearls, and in a rich jewelled dress. This may be conjectured to be the Empress Helena, to whom was granted the favour of finding the true cross, and who is represented in several ancient crosses. On the reverse side, in the centre compartment, is an Agnus Dei, enamelled upon a field of gold, without nimbus or banner, which are usually found in this emblem of the Lamb which is so frequent in early Christian art. In the oldest examples, as in this, the colour of the cross is red.—*Pugin's Glossary of Ecclesiastical Architecture.*



supposed that the event took place about the month of May, or early in the spring of the year 326.<sup>1</sup>

One of the earliest Christian writers has composed two hymns for the occasions of Holy Cross Day and Holy Rood Day, and they may be found in the Roman breviary. One of these alludes to the passion flower, which has obtained the name of the Holyrood flower, not only because it flowers at this period of the year, but because the leaves, tendrils, and different parts of the flower, have been supposed, by the religious, to represent the instruments of our blessed Saviour's passion; whence the name *Passi Flora*, and the great veneration in which it is held in some foreign countries: the five stamens have been compared to the five wounds of Christ, the three styles to the nails by which he was fixed to the cross, the column which elevates the germs to the cross itself or to the pillar to which he was bound, and the rays of the nectary to the crown of thorns.<sup>2</sup> The common passion flower, which lasts a long while in blossom, generally goes out of flower after Holyrood.

In the primitive ages of Christianity, before churches for divine worship were common, service was often performed under a cross raised in some convenient place. Such was St. Paul's Cross in London, where the practice continued until the Reformation. Such was also the antique cross in the Market-place of Halifax, Yorkshire. The cross being a sign used in civil contracts, it became usual to touch or swear by it before reading and writing in transactions relative to public and private business, and crosses were erected in the open places of towns and cities, where even to this day fairs, marts, statutes, and markets are held.<sup>3</sup> Sermons were preached at these spots, and public pageants or processions usually commenced from them or terminated there: hence Edward I. erected crosses at every place where the corpse of Queen Eleanor rested on its way to interment, desiring those spots to be considered holy. Every churchyard in early times had its cross, on which the bodies of the dead were placed while the service was read; every turning in the road had also its cross, and the boundaries of parishes had the same marks.<sup>4</sup>

At Leighton Buzzard, in Bedfordshire, is a relic of considerable antiquity, in the form of a Gothic cross of stone, beautiful even in decay; it stands in the open area of the Market-place, and is supposed to have withstood the operations of time for more than 500 years, but by whom or on what occasion it was erected, even tradition does not attempt to reveal; its form is pentagonal, in height thirty-eight feet: the upper story is divided into five niches, each containing a statue; the first is in an episcopal habit, the second represents the Virgin and Jesus, the third appears to be designed for St. John the Evangelist, the others are too mutilated to be defined.

In the centre of the square at Halifax, a little higher in the street than the cross, stood a Maypole used by the Romans in their celebrated festival called *Floralia*, which usually commenced on the 4th of the Calends of May. The feasts held at that time were called *Maxima*, and were kept by costly banquets and oblations. Constantine the Great forbade these entertain-

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Burton.

<sup>2</sup> Hortus Anglicus.

<sup>3</sup> Green's Hist. of Worcester.

<sup>4</sup> Clavis Calendaria.

ments, but they were renewed by Honorius and Arcadius in the first year of their empire, and in Britain, under other forms, have descended to our own times.

Nothing can exceed the affection the Britons testified for the memory of their excellent Empress, St. Helena. To this patroness of churches innumerable sacred edifices have been dedicated throughout our island; to enumerate the whole of them would be impossible. Far and wide, edifices, crosses, roads, and other monuments, have been raised to perpetuate her goodness.

In Colchester, the native place of St. Helena, most things have reference to her and to her finding the cross; the streets in particular exemplify this, the main street representing the shaft or body of the cross, and Head Street and North Hill the transverse part of the same.<sup>1</sup> In the parish of St. Nicholas, in that city, there is a cave bearing this princess' name; and the chapel, a place of great antiquity, is said to have been founded by the Empress herself. Just within the entrance of Colchester Castle are also exhibited some clumsy images of Helena and Constantine, carved in stone, but manifestly of modern date. A curious testimonial to the Empress exists in King Henry the Fifth's Charter to the City of Colchester, the initial letter of which represents St. Helena before the cross finely illuminated.<sup>2</sup>

In London, where Helena held her court alternately with Colchester, a religious edifice, to the east of Crosby Square, was founded by William Fitzwilliam, in commemoration of the discovery of the cross by St. Helena. It is said to have been built A. D. 1210, and was called "the Priory of St. Helen's the Less." The Church of St. Helen's the Great stands north-east of Threadneedle Street.

In Yorkshire<sup>3</sup> abundant traces exist of St. Helena; in York four churches bear her much-loved name: attached to one, an ancient edifice in the parish of Leeds, was a medicinal well, yet in existence. There was also Burgh Wallis, near Doncaster, St. Helen's Foord, at Wetherby, and St. Ellen's Chapel, at Wilton, which last was founded by Sir William Bulmer in the reign of Henry the Eighth; one in Werkdyke, another at Kilusea, in the Holderness wapentake, with the churches of Skipwith, Stillingfleet, Thoranby, in the Ouse and Derwent wapentake. In Cornwall there is a church dedicated to St. Helen, and the Church of Elstow or Helenstowe in Bedford, since turned into a monastery, is also named as having this Queen for its patron saint.

There are churches dedicated to St. Helena at Derby, Warrington, East Medina in the Isle of Wight, Norwich, Worcester, and Abingdon. St. Helen's, Worcester, is one of the most ancient edifices in that city.<sup>4</sup> The ancient hospital of St. Helen, at Abingdon, when refounded in 1533, received the denomination of Christchurch.<sup>5</sup> In Monmouthshire churches exist of St. Helen's name: there is also one at Wilton, a town situated in a vale on the Humber, dedicated to her.

St. Helen's Porch is yet in existence in the mean church of St. Helen's,

<sup>1</sup> Morant's Hist. of Colchester.

<sup>2</sup> Britton and Brayley.

<sup>3</sup> Allen's Hist. of York.

<sup>4</sup> Green's Worcester.

<sup>5</sup> Magna Brit.

Auckland, a village so called from the name of the Empress. In 1844, in the month of April, the tongue of the bell of St. Helen's, Auckland, dropped out, which, after having been divested of the rust which had been accumulating from time immemorial, was found to bear this inscription: "*Sancta Helena, ora pro nobis,*" also a bishop's mitre and crest, with the initials A. and W. at right angles. Very superstitious ideas were formerly attached to bells.<sup>1</sup>

At the east end of the side-aisles in Durham Cathedral are gates leading into the east transept, commonly called the Nine Altars. One of these altars was dedicated to St. Aidan and St. Helena.<sup>2</sup>

This interesting part of Durham Cathedral is thus described:—

"In the eastern or highest part within the church were the nine altars, dedicated and erected in honour of several saints, and of them taking their names, as the inscriptions thereof will declare; the altars being placed north and south, one from another, along the front of the church, in an alley the whole breadth thereof. In the middle of which front was the Altar of the Holy Fathers, St. Cuthbert and St. Bede, having all the aforesaid altars equally divided on either hand, on the south four, and on the north four.

"On the south were the following:—

"1. The Altar of St. Oswald and St. Lawrence.

"2. The Altar of St. Thomas of Canterbury and St. Catherine.

"3. The Altar of St. John the Baptist and St. Margaret.

"4. The Altar of St. Andrew and St. Mary Magdalene, being the outermost altar towards the south.

"On the north side of St. Cuthbert and St. Bede's Altar, were these four following:—

"1. The Altar of St. Martin and St. Edmund.

"2. The Altar of St. Peter and St. Paul.

"3. The Altar of St. Aidanus and St. Helena.

"4. The Altar of the Holy Archangel, St. Michael, being the outermost towards the north.

"Over each of these altars is a window representing the history which is attached to it. On the north side, the third was the picture of St. Aidane and St. Helena, with the like windows and lights as the rest, presenting the picture of St. Aidane in his episcopal attire, with a crossier in his hand, whose soul after his death was represented to be carried to heaven in a sheet by two angels. In this were some part of the history of Christ, and the picture of a king and two other saints; as also the picture of St. Helena in a blue habit, she being a princess; which contained the story of the religious of all orders of her sex, and her resorting often to their churches, and the picture of Our Lady and the Angel Gabriel appearing to her, and the Holy Ghost overshadowing her, with the lily springing out of the lily-pot; and underneath the middle stone-work were four angels. Above were four turret windows, with four apostles; and the picture of God Almighty above all, in another little window, with Christ in his arms."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fosbrooke's *British Monachism*.

<sup>2</sup> Hutchinson's *Durham*.

<sup>3</sup> This extract is taken from the "*History and Antiquities of Durham Cathed-*



It would almost appear that the subject of the Conception had been expressly selected for St. Helen's window, from the fact that a slur had been thrown on her bright fame by the second marriage of her husband, and that the lily springing forth from the lily-pot was an emblem of her innocence.

"A Popish chapel, dedicated to St. Helen, was in use in Queen Elizabeth's time, in Halifax in Yorkshire, near the remains of which, in the present day, is a remarkably fine well, bearing also the name of the Empress. Very near St. Helen's Well, a spot yet bears the name of Halliwell, or Holy Well Green.<sup>1</sup> It was common among the early Christians to dedicate remarkable springs to particular saints, to whose merits any cures they might perform were attributed. Upon the saint's day whose name the well bore, the people were wont to assemble to make their offerings or vow to her, a custom which was afterwards changed to that of adorning the well with boughs and flowers, and entertaining themselves with music, dancing, eating cakes, and drinking ale. The Chapel of St. Helen, at Halifax, is now converted into a cottage, but, it can be seen, has been a place of greater account: in one of the walls they show you a large stone, which is called the Cross," continues the historian of this place, "which is sometimes visited by strangers, who at the same time inquire for the well; and from the behaviour of some of them, the inhabitants concluded they were Papists, whose zeal brought them hither to behold this once famous place, of which their forefathers were despoiled. Clarke Bridge, Halifax, seems to have been first built by the clergy, to enable them to pass more conveniently from the church to the Holy Well on the opposite bank."

The worship of springs and fountains is of very ancient date, as appears from heathen authors and Christian monuments, and among many other British customs, was kept up by the Saxons long after their conversion to Christianity. This appears from injunctions and canons made to forbid them. In 967, it appears from some constitutions of Edgar, taken from a Saxon penitential: "We teach that priests shall abolish all heathenish superstitions, and forbid the worship of wells, and of trees, and of stones." Here an allusion is also made to the stone altars erected in the fields, of which many remains may be found. The same penitential contains a prohibition against "vowing or bringing alms or offerings to any wells, or stones, or tree, or to any creature, but only in God's name to God's church." A Saxon homily of Bishop Lupus, mentions some, who, being seduced by the devil, in their afflictions vow their alms either to well or stone; and in another, he cautions men against worshipping wells or trees. This foolish custom of worshipping and bringing

dral," to which the reader is referred for an account at length of the other eight altars.

<sup>1</sup> "I have the copy of a deed without date, but which, by the witnesses, must have been executed between the years 1279 and 1324, wherein William de Osete grants an assart in Linley to Henry de Sacro Fonte de Staynland, which shows that the name of the above Holy Well is no new conceit, but a real piece of antiquity, perhaps much older than the time of this deed."—*Watson's Hist. of Halifax.*



offerings to trees and fountains continued after the Conquest, as appears by a synod at London in 1102, by the constitutions of Walter, Bishop of Worcester, in 1240, and the injunctions of Oliver, Bishop of Lincoln, in 1280; which two last forbid the worshipping of Cerne and Roll's Well, St. Edward's Well, near St. Clement's at Oxford, and St. Laurence's Well, near Peterborough.<sup>1</sup> The superstitious veneration paid to St. Winifred's Well needs scarcely to be mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

After the accession of Constantine to the imperial dignity, Helena is said to have revisited her native country. It is on record, that she did so after her return from Palestine, which is unlikely at her extreme age: at an earlier date she most probably returned to Britain, either to visit her grandson Constans, or to inspect the government which Constantine had entrusted to his delegates. Kennet, in his "Parochial Antiquities," declares, that "after Helena discovered the cross, and on her return homewards, she built a castle of her own name in Silesia, and another in Spain, near Callacium, which we now call Cales; and first arriving in Ireland, which was but a short cut from Spain, and thence steering for North Wales, landed at Aber Segont, near that fair walled town which we now call Caernarvon, where Constans, her grandchild, had built a city." Within the old town there still stands a little chapel, and a delicate spring of running water close by, both bearing St. Helen's name, in memory of her landing there; and from the gates of this city is both a crossway and also a cross of stone, standing in Bivio. Between the two ways, ariseth a great causey of hard durable stone, for such is the nature of those stones that they will not wear away, the way on each side being worn out knee-deep, which the inhabitants call Sarn Elen Weddaw, *i. e.*, St. Helen the Powerful's Causeway, and runneth southward through the rocky ragged straits of the mountains, even to the south parts of the kingdom."<sup>3</sup>

The noted Sarn or Llwybr Helen, the Causeway or Path of Helen, which is a road through North Wales, supposed to have been made by this Queen,<sup>4</sup> is thus described by Pennant:—"This road is now entirely covered with turf, but by the rising of it, is in most parts very visible; beneath are the stones which form it, and it extends in all its course to the breadth of eight yards. There are tumuli near it in various places, it being very usual for the Romans to inter near their highways. Close to the part in question (where this road appears for the first time on a common) is one, in which were found five urns; the whole materials of it are composed of burnt earth and stones, with several fragments of bricks, which had been placed round the urns to keep them from being crushed."

The causeway of Helen also ran under the summit of the vast Berwyn mountains, being there an artificial road called Fordd Helen, or Helen's way,<sup>5</sup> and those also in Llanbadyr Odyn in Cardiganshire, and from

<sup>1</sup> Mag. Brit.

<sup>2</sup> Morant's History and Antiquities of Essex.

<sup>3</sup> Kennett's Parochial Antiquities.

<sup>4</sup> Pennant.

<sup>5</sup> Pennant, from the annotation on Camden.

Brecknock to Neath in Glamorganshire, passed under the name of this great Empress. Pen Caer Helen is a lofty hill, about twenty-four miles from Segontium: Pennant ascended to the summit, in hopes of discovering more of Helen's noted road, but without success. Mars ar Helen, or the Field of Helen, is also the name given to another part which Giraldus considered the course of the road. Of the Via Devana, the same author remarks: "There is no Roman road so perfect as this; like the Via Occidentalis, it bears the name of Sarn Helen. The foundation of almost all the roads through Wales have, in fact, been attributed to St. Helena, the mother of Constantine."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kennett's Parochial Antiquities.

## CARTANDIS.<sup>1</sup>

Eugenius slain in battle—Decree of Maximus—Prayers of the widow and noble ladies—The Picts interrupt their devotions—Appeal of Cartandis to Maximus—His generous sympathy—He sends her escorted to Carrick—Attack of Pictish robbers—She returns to the Emperor—Enmity of the Picts—Their remonstrances—Scene of the Picts and Cartandis before Maximus—Her agony and entreaties—Success of Cartandis through the good feeling of the Emperor.

THE history of this Queen forms a touching episode in the life of Maximus the Roman, who ruled in Britain in the fourth century. She was the wife of Eugenius I., King of Scots,—a princess of the blood royal of Wales, and is cited as an instance of connubial affection.

Eugenius was slain in a fatal battle fought against Maximus, who had invaded Scotland; and his body which was discovered among heaps of the dead, was interred, by order of that leader, with the honour and ceremony usually bestowed on the funeral of Roman princes. Afterwards an edict was passed, that by an appointed day all the Scots should quit that part of the kingdom, under penalty of death or imprisonment: they were likewise required to surrender their houses and possessions to such persons as were nominated by the Romans. In consequence of this decree, many took refuge in Ireland, the Western Isles, Norway, and Denmark; while the few who remained were either taken prisoners by the Picts, then in alliance with the Romans, or enlisted from pure despair in the service of their enemies.<sup>2</sup>

Cartandis, widow of the deceased King, learning that his remains had been consigned to the earth under another form of religion than her own,<sup>3</sup> was distressed with apprehensions for the repose of his departed spirit, and from the moment of his funeral obsequies had remained constantly on the spot, which contained the relics of all that was dear to her, occupying herself in particular prayers and devotions for the soul of the dead. Many noble ladies were with her, who, joining in her mourning, united their own devotions with hers, for their husbands and other relatives who had been slain with Eugenius in defending their country, and were interred at the same place.

While occupied in this manner, the Picts, who had first instigated Maximus to issue the edict of banishment, arrived at the spot and interrupted them in their sorrowful duty, by acquainting Cartandis with the penalty attached to the neglect of the Roman mandate. The supplica-

<sup>1</sup> This is a variation of the name of Cartismandua.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed, Scott.

<sup>3</sup> She was probably of the sect of Pelagius, who was a Welshman.

tions of Cartandis and her attendants to be left unmolested were vain ; the fierce Picts insisted on their complying with the decree, and enforcing their commands with violence, they ill-treated and insulted many of these noble and unfortunate women.

The Queen, accompanied by some of her British relatives, two gentlewomen, and a male attendant, repaired in person to the presence of Maximus, to complain of the indignity which had been offered her. She addressed a pathetic remonstrance to that general, soliciting his permission for herself and her maidens to continue in that country during the remainder of their lives, even though it were in the most servile state, provided that at their death they might be interred in the same grave as their husbands. Maximus, compassionating the misfortunes and affliction of Cartandis, whose conjugal affection he could not but admire, assigned to her the city of Carrick for an abode, with certain other revenues for the maintenance of her royal dignity.

The generous Maximus also appointed some persons to attend Cartandis for her protection while on her progress to a village not far distant from Carrick : scarcely, however, had the Roman escort safely conveyed her thither, and departed, after receiving her farewell and thanks, having, as they thought, left her in security, than a band of Pictish robbers on horseback was encountered by the ill-fated party. The fierce troop put the groom of Cartandis to the sword, and not only roughly treated her female attendants, but despoiled them and their royal mistress of all they possessed. Cartandis, however, succeeded in effecting her escape back to Maximus ; the Roman general being converted from a foe into a friend. He received her with all the honour and respect due to her rank and sufferings, and, as nearly as he was able, restored to her the value of the property of which she had been deprived : the remainder was soon after regained, upon the capture of the robber Picts, who were punished with death for the outrage which they had committed.

Cartandis, on this, became a mark for the enmity of the Picts, when they learnt how kindly Maximus had received her, and how severely he had punished those who had despoiled and insulted her. They sent a deputation of nobles of their nation to complain to him of his having thus taken part against them in favour of a woman who was their enemy, and, moreover, a prisoner and in their power. For her sake, they said Maximus ought not to have put to death men who were friends of theirs, and allies of Rome : they proceeded to require that, in conformity with the proscription which had been issued, Cartandis should be despoiled of her possessions, and detained a captive in Britain.

Cartandis was herself present at the interview of Maximus with the Pictish chieftains, and had to support a scene of great trial, before the Roman general surrounded by the powerful soldiers of the empire, as she listened as these barbarians proceeded in discussing the future destiny they desired to be awarded her. When they came to that part of their embassy which concerned her imprisonment, and she perceived their design was to send her to Wales, her former country, in opposition to that wish nearest her heart, she broke forth into a passionate lamentation, be-



wailing in piteous accents her miserable fate, and entreating rather that her life might be offered upon her husband's tomb.

Raising her clasped hands to Maximus, she besought that generous prince, in the most earnest and pathetic manner, that he would be pleased to permit her either to pass the sad remainder of her present widowed state in the manner she found most conformable to her feelings, or else to take it from her at once. At this moving spectacle, all present, the Picts alone excepted, were deeply affected, and the sorrow-stricken Queen obtained her supplicated boon: the request of the Pictish nobles was refused, and Cartandis, having a portion assigned to her, suitable to her royal birth and dignity, received permission to depart into whatever quarter of the country she pleased, and was suffered to live from that time forward, under the protection of the mighty Roman name, unmolested and undisturbed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

## HELENA AP EUDDA.

Parentage of Helena—The aspirants for her hand—Her Father wishes her marriage—Maximus proposed—Conan objects, but consents at length—Deputation—Character of Maximus—He arrives at Southampton—Promise, and ceremony of Marriage—Dream of Maxen-Wledig, a Welsh romance—Caernarvon—The Fort—The Will—Kynan-Meriadec of Armorica—Maximus and his bride at Trèves—St. Martin of Tours—The devotion of Helena to him—Gratian's Reverses—His death, and that of his son Victor—The Tears of Helena, and her Fountain.

THOUGH Helena ap Eudda is less distinguished in British History than her illustrious relative and sainted namesake, the mother of Constantine, her character, and the particulars of her life, are not devoid of interest, as affording an instance of female influence, and as one of the earliest patrons of Christianity.

The father of Helena was son of Caradocus, Duke of Cornwall, the ancient tin country, and grandson of the Asclepiodatus,<sup>1</sup> or "Bran ap Llyr,"<sup>2</sup> so noted in the times of Constantius. Eudda,<sup>3</sup> or Octavius, as he was denominated by the Romans, Duke of the Wisseans,<sup>4</sup> had married Guala, sister of St. Helena, and received with her, as a bridal dowry, the kingdom of North Wales, it being the second time that territory had been conveyed to a new line of monarchs, by marriage with a daughter of that royal house. Eudda and Guala, by their union, connected in one the families of Wales and Cornwall; and the vast possessions thus united under their control, were destined to become, in process of time, the marriage-portion of their only child Helena,<sup>5</sup> whose noble inheritance caused her to be sought by many an aspiring adventurer. The young princess herself, who was born at Caer Segont, or Caernarvon, possessed qualifications which rendered her worthy of her lofty destiny. The increasing years of her aged parent made him anxious to see this child, who was his sole heir, settled in marriage with some prince, whose merits entitled him to succeed to the regal dignity; and fearing, least in the

<sup>1</sup> Rowland's *Mona Antiqua*.

<sup>2</sup> Bran ap Llyr is celebrated for his valour, and as being the ancestor of Arthur and all those heroes who contended against the Romans, Saxons, and Danes for the freedom of their mountain-district.—*Geoffrey of Monmouth, Lappenberg*.

<sup>3</sup> Or Ederus, sometimes written Paternus or Padarn, Edern ap Padarn, or "with the crimson cloak."—*Owen's Cam. Biog.*

<sup>4</sup> The Wiccii, or people of Worcester, over whom Venutius had formerly reigned.

<sup>5</sup> Warrington, Gibbon, Pennant.

event of his own death, without some previous arrangement to that effect, other aspirants to the crown might spring up, Eudda called a council of state, to take the subject into consideration. The king inquired of his assembled nobles, which of his family they would prefer to reign over them at his death, and the majority were desirous of securing peace to the nation, by bestowing the Princess Helena on some noble Roman. Several members of the British senate dissented in favour of Conan Meriadec,<sup>1</sup> the king's nephew, who was present, whom they wished to become their ruler. Caradocus, Duke of Cornwall, son of Trahewrne, and cousin of St. Helena, gave his opinion in favour of Maximus, the Roman senator—a person not only allied to the imperial family, and educated in Rome, but his own cousin, being a son of Llewelyn, his father's brother, and equally related with himself to the royal family of Britain. This proposition met with general approbation, except from Conan, who himself aimed at the crown, and was much displeased at it: the matter, however, being arranged in favour of Maximus, Conan consented that Mauritianus, his son, should become the ambassador of Eudda to the imperial court.

Accordingly, Maximus was duly informed by Mauritianus of the intentions of King Eudda to honour him with the hand of the lovely Helena, with the reversion of the crown in perspective. The embassy met with an honourable reception at the court of Rome, where Mauritianus was nobly entertained; and Maximus greatly pleased with the brilliant prospect that awaited him, undertook the journey into Britain.<sup>2</sup>

Flavius Clemens Maximus was born in a second marriage of Llewelyn, the brother of Coel, with a Roman lady. The place of his birth is differently stated: Spain, Rome, and Britain contend for the honour. His near relationship to the imperial family had caused him to be educated at the capital with great care,<sup>3</sup> and by his bravery he rendered himself worthy of the distinction at which he eventually arrived.<sup>4</sup> The poets write of him as a robber-chief; but lofty talents he no doubt possessed. Long before Maximus was invited to Britain by Eudda, he had made that country his residence, having been called thither to repel the Picts and Scots: his noble conduct towards Cartandis, which has been named in her Life, gives a favourable view of his character.

At the time when the British embassy reached him, Maximus was contending with Gratian and Valentinian for a third share in the Roman Empire, which they had refused to accord him: his progress towards the island-home of his future wife was marked by the subjugation of several cities of the Franks, while his train was speedily augmented by a large number of followers. This popular chief arrived in safety at Southampton. But his expecting father-in-law regarded his martial array as having a hostile aspect, and, struck with sudden fear, ordered his nephew Conan immediately to raise an army to oppose his further progress.<sup>5</sup>

The tidings of the misunderstanding which had arisen in the mind of

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>2</sup> Polwhele's Cornwall.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel.

<sup>4</sup> In Llyud's Brev. of Brit. he is called "the Robber of Richborough."

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Eudda having reached the Roman prince, he consulted with Mauritius as to the course which it would be best for him to take. They determined to send twelve aged men, bearing olive-branches in their hands, to Conan. This embassy was admitted to a hearing, and it was stated that Maximus had come from the two Emperors of Rome on a visit, the object of which was peace and not war; when Conan and others persuaded Eudda to desist from his contemplated hostilities. After this, Maximus was conducted by Conan to London, where he had an interview with Eudda. Prior to their meeting, Caradocus and Mauritius had privately consulted with the King, when the former strongly urged the suit of Maximus, and ended with the following words: "Should you refuse him, what right could you plead to the crown of Britain against him; for he is the cousin of Constantine, and the nephew of King Coel, whose daughter Helena possessed the crown by an undeniable right?"<sup>1</sup> The King acquiesced, and the people, being uniformly in favour of the match, Maximus was promised the hand of Helena ap Eudda, and the rich inheritance she derived from her parents.<sup>2</sup>

The nuptial ceremony took place at Caernarvon, where Eudda resided and held a royal court. There yet exists, in the Welsh language, a fabulous story relating to this circumstance, which is called "the Dream of Maximus."

Lady Charlotte Guest has devoted herself to the translation of this national composition, "The Dream of Maxen Wledig, or The Glorious," of which the following is an extract. That very interesting tradition, so poetically connected with the subject of this biography, is composed in these terms:—

"Maxen Wledig was Emperor of Rome, and he was a comelier man, and a better and a wiser, than any emperor that had been before him. While hunting one day, he fell asleep and had a dream, in the course of which he came to an island, the fairest island in the whole world; and he traversed the island from sea to sea, even to the farthest shore of the island: valleys he saw, and steepes and rocks of wondrous height, and rugged precipices; never yet saw he the like. And thence he beheld an island in the sea, facing this rugged land; and between him and this island was a country of which the plane was as large as the sea, the mountain as vast as the wood; and from the mountain he saw a river that flowed through the land, and fell into the sea. And at the mouth of the river he beheld a castle, the fairest that man ever saw; and the gate of the castle was open, and he went into the castle; and in the castle he saw a fair hall, of which the roof seemed to be all gold; the walls of the hall seemed to be entirely of glittering precious gems; the doors all seemed to be of gold; golden seats he saw in the hall, and silver tables; and on a seat opposite to him he beheld two auburn-haired youths playing at chess; he saw a silver board for the chess, and golden pieces thereon. The garments of the youths were of jet-black satin, and chaplets of ruddy gold bound their hair, whereon were sparkling jewels of great price, rubies and gems, alternately with imperial stones; buskins of new cordovan leather on their feet, fastened by slides of red gold.

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts's Notes to British History.



"And beside a pillar in the hall he saw a hoary-headed man, in a chair of ivory, with the figures of two eagles of ruddy gold thereon; bracelets of gold were upon his arms, and many rings upon his hands, and a golden torque about his neck, and his hair was bound with a golden diadem. He was of powerful aspect; a chess-board of gold was before him, and a rod of gold and a steel file in his hand, and he was carving out chess-men.

"And he saw a maiden sitting before him in a chair of ruddy gold: not more easy than to gaze upon the sun when brightest, was it to look upon her by reason of her beauty. A vest of white silk was upon the maiden, with clasps of red gold at the breast; and a surcoat of gold tissue was upon her, and a frontlet of red gold upon her head, and rubies and gems were in the frontlet, alternating with pearls and imperial stones; and a girdle of ruddy gold was around her. She was the fairest sight that man ever beheld.

"The maiden arose from her chair before him, and he threw his arms about the neck of the maiden, and they two sat down together in the chair of gold; and the chair was not less roomy for them both, than for the maiden alone. And as he had his arms about the maiden's neck, and his cheek by her cheek, behold, through the chafing of the dogs at their leashing, and the clashing of the shields as they struck against each other, and the beating together of the shafts of the spears,<sup>1</sup> and the neighing of the horses and their prancing, the Emperor awoke.

"And when he awoke, nor spirit nor existence was left him, because of the maiden whom he had seen in his sleep, for the love of the maiden pervaded his whole frame. Then his household spake unto him, 'Lord,' said they, 'is it not past the time for thee to take thy food?' Thereupon the Emperor mounted his palfrey, the saddest man that mortal ever saw, and went forth towards Rome.

"And thus he was during the space of a week. When they of the household went to drink wine and mead out of golden vessels, he went not with any of them; when they went to listen to songs and tales, he went not with them there; neither would he be persuaded to do anything but sleep. And as often as he slept, he beheld in his dreams the maiden he loved best; but, except when he slept, he saw nothing of her, for he knew not where in the world she was.

"At length Maxen sent for his wise men, and told them of his dream; and by their advice he sent messengers into different parts of the world, to discover the place and lady of whom he had dreamt. At the end of the year they returned without success, and he was very sorrowful. Then Maxen went to the spot where he had slept, and pointed it out himself. 'Behold, this is where I was when I saw the dream, and I went towards the source of the river westward.' On which thirteen messengers set forth on the track prescribed, and at last, in the great ship, they crossed the sea, and came to the island of Britain. And they traversed the island

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<sup>1</sup> When sleep had first come upon Maxen, "his attendants stood and set up their shields around him upon the shafts of their spears, to protect him from the sun, and they placed a gold enamelled shield under his head. And so Maxen slept." To this the passage above refers.

until they came to Snowdon. 'Behold,' said they, 'the rugged land that our master saw.' And they went forward until they saw Anglesey before them, and until they saw Arvon<sup>1</sup> likewise. 'Behold,' said they, 'the land our master saw in his sleep.' And they saw Aber Sain,<sup>2</sup> and a castle at the mouth of the river. The portal of the castle saw they open, and into the castle they went; and they saw a hall in the castle. Then said they, 'Behold the hall which he saw in his sleep.' They went into the hall, and they beheld two youths playing at chess, on the golden bench. And they beheld the hoary-headed man beside the pillar, in the ivory chair, carving chess-men. And they beheld the maiden sitting on a chair of ruddy gold. The messengers bent down upon their knees—'Empress of Rome, all hail!' 'Ha, gentles,' said the maiden, 'ye bear the seeming of honourable men, and the badge of envoys.<sup>3</sup> What mockery is this ye do me?' 'We mock thee not, lady; but the Emperor of Rome hath seen thee in his sleep, and he has neither life nor spirit left because of thee. Thou shalt have of us, therefore, the choice, lady—whether thou wilt go with us and be made Empress of Rome, or that the Emperor come hither and take thee for his wife?' 'Ho! lords,' said the maiden, 'I will not deny what ye say, neither will I believe it too well. If the Emperor loves me, let him come here to seek me.'

"And by day and night the messengers hied them back, and when their horses failed they bought other fresh ones. And when they came to Rome, they saluted the Emperor, and asked their boon, which was given them, according as they named it. 'We will be thy guides, lord,' said they, 'over sea and over land, to the place where is the woman whom best thou lovest; for we know her name, and her kindred, and her race.' And immediately the Emperor set forth with his army, and these men were his guides. Towards the island of Britain they went, over the sea and over the deep. And he conquered the island from Beli, the son of Monogan, and his sons, and drove them to the sea, and went forward even unto Arvon. And the Emperor knew the land when he saw it. And when he beheld the Castle of Aber Sain, 'Look yonder,' said he; 'there is the castle wherein I saw the damsel whom I best love;' and he went forward into the castle and into the hall, and there he saw Kynan, the son of Eudov, and Adeon, the son of Eudov, playing at chess. And he saw Eudov, the son of Caradawc, sitting on a chair of ivory, carving chess-men. And the maiden whom he had beheld in his sleep, he saw sitting on a chair of gold. 'Empress of Rome,' said he, 'all hail!' and the Emperor threw his arms about her neck; and that night she became his bride.

"And the next day in the morning, the damsel asked her maiden-portion. And he told her to name what she would, and she asked to have the island of Britain for her father, from the Channel to the Irish Sea, together with the three adjacent islands, to hold under the Empress of Rome; and to have three chief castles made for her, in whatever

<sup>1</sup> Caern-arvon.

<sup>2</sup> Segont.

<sup>3</sup> Each of them wore one sleeve on the front of his cap, as a sign he was a messenger, that no harm should be done him in passing through hostile lands.

places she might choose on the island of Britain. And she chose to have the highest castle made at Arvon. And they brought thither earth from Rome, that it might be more healthful for the Emperor to sleep, and sit, and walk upon.<sup>1</sup> After that the two other castles were made for her, which were Caerlleon and Caermarthen.

"Then Helen bethought her to make high roads from one castle to another throughout the island of Britain. And the roads were made. And for this cause are they called the roads of Helen Luyddawc, that she was sprung from a native of this island, and the men of the island of Britain would not have made these great roads for any save her."<sup>2</sup>

Caernarvon, the scene of this romance, afterwards became celebrated as the birthplace of Edward II., the first Prince of Wales. The river Seiont, from which the place derived its ancient name, rises in the heart of Snowdonia, and forms the lakes of Llandberis in its passage, which rather inclines to the southwest, till it turns abruptly to the north to reach the sea beneath the mighty towers of Caernarvon. The ruins of Segontium are yet distinguishable on a planted hill near its exit, where the view of Caernarvon, with its castle and the coast of Anglesey, across a great arm of the sea, is hardly to be paralleled for beauty.<sup>3</sup> Near the steep bank of the river Seiont, at a small distance from the castle, is an ancient Roman fort. Near the corner of one of the walls, is a heap of stones,<sup>4</sup> the ruins of a tower the foundation of which was accidentally discovered some years ago. This place seems intended to secure a landing-place from the Seiont at time of high water; and Pennant says: "I was informed that in Trer Beblie, on the opposite shore, had been other ruins, the work of the same people." At a small distance above this, and about a quarter of a mile from the Menai, is the ancient Segontium, to the use of which the fort had been subservient. It forms an oblong, of very considerable extent, seemingly about six acres, placed on the summit of rising ground, and sloping down on every side. It is now divided by the public road; but in several parts are vestiges of walls; and in one place appears the remnant of a building made with tiles, and plastered with very hard and smooth mortar; this seems to have been part of a hypocaust. At present a public road passes through this station, beyond which the Romans had only a small outpost or two in this country.<sup>5</sup>

At Segontium the Empress Helena ap Eudda had a chapel of her own, of which the author of the "*Mona Antiqua*" assures us the remains were in existence in his days.<sup>6</sup> A well, near the fort, even now bears the name of the princess, and some very slight remains of ruins are to be seen adjacent, which tradition informs us is the spot upon which the chapel of the Empress stood.

A Triad has been preserved, which goes at some length into the expe-

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth; Carew's Cornwall.

<sup>2</sup> This great work was apparently the same as that commenced by St. Helen, the Empress.

<sup>3</sup> Skene's Rivers.

<sup>4</sup> Pennant.

<sup>5</sup> Pennant's Wales.

<sup>6</sup> Rowland's *Mona Antiqua*.



dition undertaken by "Kynan Meriadec and his sister Helen, surnamed Luyddawe,<sup>1</sup> or Helen of Mighty Hosts, the children of Euddav," for the purpose of supporting the claim of Maximus to the imperial throne. They raised an army of 60,000 men in Britain, and proceeded with it across the sea to Armorica, A. D., 383: the desolation caused by this abstraction of its inhabitants from the island, is said to have been the remote cause of the Saxon invasion.<sup>2</sup> This is another version of the colonization of Bretagne, noticed previously.

The great reputation Maximus had acquired in Britain by his military successes against the Picts and Scots, had gained the affections of the people, whose predilection was still further confirmed by his marriage with Helena. From this time they identified their own views with his, and he was constrained to accept the purple in accordance with their wishes.<sup>3</sup> The accession of Maximus is placed in the year 383; he afterwards declared to St. Martin, that "he had accepted the Empire with regret, but that he was prepared to defend by the sword that diadem which had been bestowed by Heaven."

After his marriage, Maximus, with the flower of the British youth, who had rallied round his standard, had returned with his bride into Gaul,<sup>4</sup> where he established his court at Trèves, and in defiance of his imperial opponents, assumed to himself the dignity of an Emperor of Spain, Gaul, and Britain. Gildas remarks, that he "stretched out his wings" from the seat of his empire, "to Spain and to Italy," levying taxes on the barbarous nations by the mere terror of his name; and the moderation of the government of the Usurper, during whose reign not a single enemy or rebel perished, otherwise than in fair and open warfare, forcibly demonstrates the willing allegiance of the nations over whom he ruled.

St. Martin, who had, A. D. 374, been elected Bishop of Tours, and as an apostle, had diffused the light of Christianity throughout Gaul, destroying all the temples of heathenism, was received with every mark of respect and honour by the Emperor Valentinian, then in that country.<sup>5</sup> When the holy bishop waited upon the Emperor at Trèves, Maximus made him sit at his table with the most illustrious persons of his court. He was placed at the right hand of the Emperor, who, in drinking, commanded his servants to give him a cup, that St. Martin might receive it again from him; but the bishop bestowed it in his turn on the priest who had accompanied him on his journey,—a holy boldness, which, far from displeasing, gained him the favour of the Emperor, and of his whole court.

The wife of Maximus, the beautiful Helena, who now held the rank of Empress of the West, insisted on waiting upon the venerable priest whilst partaking of his scanty repast, as if she were of mean estate. Of this pious British woman, Sulpicius Severus writes thus, in his Dialogue on the Virtues of St. Martin: "By day, and by night, the Queen hung

<sup>1</sup> Conan and Helen are here represented as brother and sister.

<sup>2</sup> Lady C. Guest's Notes to the Mabinogion.

<sup>4</sup> Warrington.

<sup>3</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>5</sup> Ency. Brit.



upon the words of Martin, and like her example in the Gospel, washed the holy man's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Martin, whom no woman had ever approached to touch, could not escape from her assiduities, or rather submission. She thought not of the wealth of a kingdom, the dignity of empire, the crown and the purple; nothing could remove her from the posture she had taken at his feet, till having asked her husband's consent, they together compelled Martin to accede to her request, that she herself, without the aid of servants, might be permitted to prepare him a banquet. The blessed man was reluctantly obliged to yield. The chaste preparations are made by the hands of the Queen, the seat is placed by her, the table drawn to it, the water supplied by her own hands; she serves the food which she had cooked, and while he partakes sitting, she persists in placing herself on the floor at a distance, with the customary respect shown by servants, imitating their modesty and humility in all she does. Herself mixes the wine for him to drink, herself hands it to him; and supper being finished, she collects the fragments and crumbs of the bread which he had partaken of, rightly judging them, by the faith in her, to be more precious relics than an imperial banquet. Blessed woman! deserving to be compared in piety with her who came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon—if we consider merely outward history; but if we compare the faith of the Queen, which we may do, apart from the majesty of the mystery contained in the Scripture narrative, the one came to *hear* the wise man, the other obtained grace, not only to *hear*, but to *serve*. \* \* \* The Queen, on this occasion, ministered like Martha, and heard like Mary.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Martin employed his influence with Maximus to preserve the Priscillianists, who were persecuted by the clergy in Spain. The Bishop of Tours would hold no communion with men whose religious principles induced them to shed the blood of mankind; and he obtained the lives of those whose death they had solicited.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Martin introduced the monastic system into Gaul, and his example was followed by his relative, St. Patrick, the Hibernian apostle. Martin resided in a cell made of twigs interwoven, and many of his disciples occupied caverns. No one had any property, or bought and sold, but all things were common. No art was exercised but writing, in which the juniors alone were occupied; the seniors devoting their time to prayer. They rarely left their cells, except to assemble at the place of prayer. They took their refectio together, after the hour of fasting. None but the sick drank wine. St. Martin is frequently represented giving his cloak to a beggar, probably from having introduced the garb. Many of his followers were clothed with a stuff made of the *bristles of camels*, a softer habit being esteemed criminal. These habits were anciently worn by British monks also, as well as those of Gaul, and hats formed of the same. The *camblet* cloth of a later period was made of goats' wool.

The camels' or goats' hair shirt reached from the elbows to the knees: the hair material was worked into fine threads, and woven by weavers on purpose. One similar to them, belonging to Becket, was washed by his chaplain; they were commonly infested with vermin.

The feet and legs were usually bare; the Anglo-Saxons received their visitors by hospitably giving them water to wash their feet and hands, and wiping them with a towel. — Fosbrooke's Brit. Monachism.

<sup>2</sup> Ency. Brit.

Gratian,<sup>1</sup> then twenty-eight years of age, had made himself conspicuous by the protection of the Christians, for which he was hated by the whole heathen world, whose worship he intended to abolish utterly.<sup>2</sup> He was still contending for the Empire with Maximus, and sent Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, to him, to sue for a peace, to which Maximus seemed to incline, while, in reality, he appears to have conspired against the life of his enemy. As this is the greatest blot on the character of the Christian Maximus, it appears worthy of particular detail.

Gratian had offended the veteran soldiers, by sending some Alans against Maximus, in preference to themselves, and numbers in consequence revolted to Maximus, who made them large promises of reward. This alarmed Gratian, who fled to Paris, whither Maximus, after defeating the Alans, pursued his imperial foe, and fixed his camp without the city. After five days, occupied in slight skirmishes, with no particular advantage on either side, first the Moors, and then the rest of the army, deserted to the side of Maximus, and Gratian, with three hundred horse only, made his escape to Lyons, other cities refusing him admittance. Maximus, who aimed at his opponent's personal destruction, followed with his army, but not succeeding by force of arms, had recourse to the following stratagem.<sup>3</sup> He caused letters to be sent to Gratian, informing him that his wife was on her way to visit him. The unfortunate Prince crediting the information, repaired to the banks of the Rhone, which runs by the city, to meet her, believing her to be approaching, and overjoyed in the prospect of their meeting. When he opened the litter, and expected to clasp her in his embrace, he was treacherously murdered by Andragathius, an adherent of Maximus, who, with other ruffians, had been hired to assassinate him. By his death Maximus became undisputed master of the Western Empire.<sup>4</sup>

This event has left a stain on the otherwise bright fame of the Emperor Maximus; so imperfect is the virtue of the greatest hero of those times.

Having rendered himself master of Gaul, Maximus colonized it with British soldiers, and next attempted to appease his envious rival Conan, who, jealous of his successful suit with Helena, and subsequent elevation to the Empire, had laid waste some of his territories in Britain. To silence this competitor, Maximus bestowed on him a portion of Gaul, called Armorica at that time, but after that date known under the name of Bretagne, or Little Britain.<sup>5</sup> This cession was made A. D. 384.

<sup>1</sup> A burgher of a British municipal town.—Orosius.

<sup>2</sup> Echard.

<sup>3</sup> Echard's History of Rome.

<sup>4</sup> Echard, Howel, Med. Hist. Angl. Palgrave.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Lappenberg, in his "England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings," remarks on this subject: "This settlement has given a name, as well as a distinct character and history to the province of Bretagne. Though that country had, from the earliest times, by descent, language, and Druidism, been related to Britain, yet the new colonists, who were followed by many others, both male and female, served unquestionably to bind more closely and preserve the connexion between Bretagne and the Britons of Cornwall and Wales; and but for this event, the heroic poetry of France and Germany had probably been without the charm cast over it by the traditions of the Sangraal, of Tristan and Iseult, and of Arthur and Merlin. But Britain was thereby deprived of her bravest warriors, and thence the more easily became an early prey to foreign invaders."

Maximus, after this, sent an embassy to Cornwall, to demand from the King the hand of his daughter Ursula, for Conan; and the young princess, and a numerous train of British females, many of whom were married women, quitted for ever the shores of their native country. Abundance of fables have been written of their number, the adventures that befell them, and the glorious death they encountered from the savage Huns.<sup>1</sup> They were martyred near the Lower Rhine, and buried at Cologne, where a tomb was erected over their remains, and a great church built on the spot.<sup>2</sup> This well-known edifice became celebrated to all time for the tomb of St. Ursula, and her "eleven thousand" holy companions. St. Ursula, "who was the mistress and guide to heaven of so many holy maidens, whom she animated to the heroic practice of virtue, conducted to the glorious crown of martyrdom, and presented spotless to Christ, is regarded as a model and patroness by those who undertake to train up youth in the sentiments and practice of piety and religion."<sup>3</sup>

The sisters of the order of St. Ursula are, in the Roman Communion, the instructresses of young females, and their establishments, those of Ursuline Sisters, are well known all over the continent.

In the poem we have before quoted, called "the Dream of Maxen," he is said to have spent seven years in Britain, and after that returned to Rome, making many conquests by the way in the countries through which he passed. He laid siege to Rome, but had made no progress at the end of a year, when succours from Britain reached him. These were "the brothers of Helen Luyddawc," with a small host of Britons, "and better warriors were in that small host than twice as many Romans."

"And Helen went to see the hosts, and she knew the standards of her brothers. Then came Kynan, the son of Eudav, and Adeon, the son of Eudav, to meet the Emperor. And the Emperor was glad because of them, and embraced them.

"Then they looked at the Romans as they attacked the city. Said Kynan to his brother, 'We will try to attack the city more expertly than this.' So they measured by night the height of the wall, and they sent their carpenters to the wood, and a ladder was made for every four men of their number. Now when these were ready, every day at mid-day the Emperors went to meat, and they ceased to fight on both sides till all had finished eating. And in the morning the men of Britain took their food, and they drank until they were invigorated. And while the two Emperors were at meat, the Britons came to the city, and placed their ladders against it, and forthwith they came in through the city.

"The new Emperor had not time to arm himself when they fell upon him, and slew him, and many others with him. And three nights and three days were they subduing the men that were in the city and taking the castle. And others of them kept the city, lest any of the host of Maxen should come therein, until they had subjected all to their will.

"Then spake Maxen to Helen Luyddawc: 'I marvel, lady,' said he, 'that thy brothers have not conquered this city for me.' 'Lord Emperor,' she answered, 'the wisest youths in the world are my brothers. Go

<sup>1</sup> Butler.

<sup>2</sup> A. D 453.—Sigebert's Chronicle.

<sup>3</sup> Butler's Lives of Saints.



thou thither and ask the city of them, and if it be in their possession thou shalt have it gladly.' So the Emperor and Helen went and demanded the city. And they told the Emperor that none had taken the city, and that none could give it him, but the men of the island of Britain. Then the gates of the city of Rome were opened, and the Emperor sat on the throne, and all the men of Rome submitted themselves unto him."

How far the dream of Maximus is in accordance with the general facts of history it is difficult to say. There is no doubt that Maximus was one of the most heroic and successful of Roman emperors, and it is equally certain that Helena accompanied him in his wars abroad. Both Roman and British authorities concur in the narrative of his conquests and great enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

Helena had three sons by Maximus, of whom Victor was the chosen companion of his martial expeditions. Publicius, his brother, retiring from the world, assumed the religious habit, and to him the Mother Church of Segontium was dedicated. "It stands about half a mile south-east of the town, and from its royal patron, who was canonized at his death, bears the name of Llan Pablic, or Publicius."<sup>2</sup> This church and the chapel of Caernarvon were bestowed by King Richard II. upon the nuns of St. Mary's at Chester, on account of their poverty.

"The dress of Pabo post prydain, called the 'Pillar of Britain,' as seen on his tomb, is a specimen of that worn by a royal priest in the time of Publicius. Pabo, who was contemporary with the sons of Helena, and the founder of Llan Pabo in Anglesey, is clad in a long dalmatic, partly opened at the sides, and bordered with fur. Round the neck and down the front, is a border of lace, richly studded with pearls. St. Jestin ap Geraint, a prince of the Devonshire Britons, who lived a century later than Pabo, is habited in a cope, fastened on the breast with a rich fibula; beneath this he has a short mantle or scapular over his tunic. This mode of dress was of the highest antiquity, and remained in vogue for royal personages till the time of Henry V. In his right hand the saint holds a staff, not unlike the augural staff of the ancients."<sup>3</sup>

The brilliant career of Maximus was destined to a sudden close. Valentinian, on being driven from Italy by Maximus, obtained assistance from Theodosius, Emperor of the East, who subdued his hitherto successful rival at Aquileia, A. D. 388. The inhabitants of the city seeing, or fancying they saw, despondency in his hitherto buoyant spirit, abandoned him in his first reverse, stripped the Emperor of his regal ornaments, and carried him bound to Theodosius. The generous Emperor would have pardoned him, but those who surrounded him, perceiving the clemency he designed to execute, hurried Maximus from his presence, and ordered his head to be cut off, even without the Emperor's mandate.<sup>4</sup>

Thus fell Maximus, the first to bear the name of Wledig, or "Illustrious,"—a surname equivalent to that of Emperor, afterwards borne by

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>2</sup> Pennant.

<sup>3</sup> Smith and Meyrick's Costumes of Britain.

<sup>4</sup> Echard.



the Roman princes of his family in Britain: his dominions were annexed by Theodosius to his own, and afterwards transmitted to his son Honorius, who became Emperor of the West.<sup>1</sup>

Victor, son of Maximus, had been slain with his father at Aquileia, and some of his most dreaded relatives and friends were put to death as an example: the rest were pardoned; "so that," says the Chronicle, "under so merciful a conqueror, they felt not that they were conquered."<sup>2</sup>

The wife and daughters of Maximus seem to have been taken prisoners, probably at the surrender of Aquileia. Theodosius sent for them out of their confinement, settled an honourable pension upon them for their lives, and charged "a near kinsman of their own" to take care of their interests, and see that nobody oppressed them.<sup>3</sup> This statement differs from the one given in our national histories and traditions, from which it would appear that Helena was in Britain when Maximus died. The spot on which the Empress received the fatal tidings of the death of her husband and son, is still pointed out in Wales,<sup>4</sup> in the beautiful vale of Festiniog, where the springs called Fynnon Helen are supposed to have been derived from her tears.

One of the sons of Helen had entered the cloister, a second died a violent death abroad; for the third, Cunetha, it was reserved to transmit the honoured title of Wledig, with the maternal inheritance, to his children, among whom it was divided at his death. The original patrimony of Cunetha was in Cumberland and some neighbouring districts; and the Triads celebrate his praise, as being the first in this island who granted lands and privileges to the Church.<sup>5</sup> Wales was divided by Cu-

<sup>1</sup> Warrington, Howel, and Daniel.

<sup>2</sup> Such of these princes as were driven by the Saxons from their possessions embraced a religious life, and were ranked with the children of Bran and Brechan, under the appellation of "the three holy families of Britain." Theodoric, [Owen's Cambrian Biography,] son of Tethwald, King of Caermarthen in Wales, resigning his crown, settled as a hermit at a spot since known as Tintern. In that place, surrounded by rocks, he designed to pass the remnant of his days in solitude and peace; but the success of the Saxons compelled him to arm in defence of his country, and he was slain at Mathern, near Chepstow, by a mortal wound in the head. His body was buried on the spot where he fell, and Bishop Godwin saw his remains, which had been deposited in a stone coffin. [Stillington and Powel.] At a later period Tintern was a place of refuge for two other monarchs, who also left the spot to encounter a violent end: Kilwulf, King of Wessex, being dragged thence by his subjects, against his will, A. D. 610, to act once more as their leader; and Edward the Second, who fled there from the pursuit of his guilty queen, Isabella. Marcella, daughter of the slain hero, Theodoric, hermit of Tintern, named Olaf King of Ireland, became mother of Brechan, who inherited her estates in Wales; so that Caermardhin took from him its ancient name of Brechonia, or Breconia, in British Brechnock, in English Breknock: [Powel; Girald. Camb.:] thus an Irish historian remarks that, "Brecknock town and Brecknockshire have caused the glory of Ireland, that gave them the name of honour, which they hold to this day; and Ireland to glory in them, that gave their king's son, Marcella, their lady, and all that country in her right." [Hanmer's Chronicle.]

<sup>3</sup> Echard.

<sup>4</sup> Girald. Camb.

<sup>5</sup> Sir John Price.

netha among his sons; and its several provinces yet bear the names of those early British princes: Cardigan, especially named as a part of their grandmother Helena's territory, was so called from Caredic, son of Cunetha.<sup>1</sup> Of the whole family, Eneon Urdd, or "the Honourable," was most distinguished. His son, Caswallon Caw Hir, or the "Long-Handed," fixed his royal abode in Mona in 443; and, as the eldest branch of the Cynethian family, received homage from the princes, his contemporaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Owen's Cambrian Biography.

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## ROWENA.

Vortigern, hoping to establish order in Britain, invites Hengist and Horsa—Arrival of the Saxons—The feast at Thong Castle—The fatal Was-heil—Rowena's beauty—Dress of Saxon ladies—Marriage of Vortigern—His first wife—Gods of the Saxons—The Irminsula—Discontent of the Britons—Excommunication and separation—Vortimer proclaimed King—Fury of Hengist—Rowena's artifices—She poisons Vortimer in a nosegay—Vortigern consults Merlin—History of Ambrosius—The fortress in Snowdon—The massacre at Ambresbury—The Valley of Vortigern.

THE pressure of the Barbarians, those "many-nationed spoilers," had obliged the hitherto triumphant Romans to concentrate their attention and all their power in their own country, and, by degrees, they withdrew their forces from the remote provinces which owned their sway, until Britain was altogether abandoned by them, and left to the British princes, who were forced to carry on continual warfare with the savage Picts, and that people called the Scots of Ireland, settled on the west coast. The Saxons also came occasionally, to "fright the isle from its propriety," by their incursions; and the endless quarrels of the chiefs for supremacy, plunged the whole land into such a state of anarchy, that Vortigern, who then filled the uneasy throne of South Britain, may be excused, in his despair of establishing order, for forming the resolution of seeking protection and assistance from the powerful and restless German freebooters, whom he had hitherto looked upon as enemies.

In an evil hour for the freedom of his country, Vortigern summoned to his aid the unscrupulous adventurers, Hengist and Horsa, and Britain became their prey.

The loves of Vortigern and Rowena have become the property of the romancer, and some historians reject the traditions respecting them; but yet the story is as often repeated as omitted by chroniclers, and is by some attested as worthy of credit. There is a probability about it, which, while it interests, enlists the reader in its favour.

Nennius, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and their followers, tell the story of Rowena's fatal charms, and she is named in the Welsh Triads as Ronwen. She was the daughter of the Jutish captain, Hengist, who, after he had successfully assisted Vortigern against his foes, had established himself and his party in the country: rejoicing to find themselves powerful chiefs, who were lately banished adventurers, expelled from their own shores.

When, at first, the Saxons stood before the King, says Roger of Wendover, he asked them respecting the faith and religion of their ancestors, on which Hengist replied: "We worship the gods of our fathers, Saturn, Jupiter, and the other deities, who govern the world, and especially Mercury, whom, in our tongue, we call Woden, and to whom our fathers dedicated the fourth day of the week, which, to this day, is called Woden's Day. Next to him, we worship the most powerful goddess, Frea, to whom they dedicated the sixth day, which, after her, we call Friday." "I grieve much," said Vortigern, "for your belief, or rather, for your unbelief; but I am exceedingly rejoiced at your coming, which, whether brought about by God, or otherwise, is most opportune for my urgent necessities. For I am pressed by my enemies on every side; and if ye will share with me the toil of fighting, ye shall remain in my kingdom, where ye shall be had in honour, and enriched with lands and possessions." The Barbarians straightway assented, and having made league with him, remained at his court.

Hengist had received as the reward of his helping arm, from the grateful Vortigern, a fertile and commanding tract of land, on the Thames, called by the Britons, Ruoiuin, and by the Saxons, Thanet. As soon as Hengist was fairly established, he sent for new allies to his native country, and his welcome summons was speedily answered by the arrival of a host of relations and friends, all greedy for gain. But the most attractive personage amongst these, and one on whose power the wily Jute most depended, was his beautiful daughter Rowena, celebrated, wherever she had been seen, for her surpassing loveliness and grace, "a prodigy of beauty, and the admiration of all men."

There is a tradition generally repeated, that Hengist's modest demand, on being requested by Vortigern to name the price of his services, was merely as much land as he could cover with a hide; this being of course granted, the cunning freebooter had it cut into thongs, and thus managed to procure a considerably larger share than was intended. However this may be, he became possessed of a great portion of the country, and built or appropriated numerous castles, which he fortified, and where his followers established themselves.

It was at one of these, to which, it seems, he had given the name of Thong Castle, the situation of which is variously asserted (some chroniclers insisting on its being at Doncaster, others, that it was in Kent), that Hengist entertained the somewhat weak and luxurious Vortigern, and there, at a grand banquet, he introduced his fascinating daughter Rowena to the Prince.

In order to do the more honour to his guest, Hengist commanded the beautiful maiden to wait upon him during the repast, according to the fashion of the time, and Vortigern was not slow in taking the bait held out. At the first glance his eye had been dazzled by Rowena's beauty, and the smiling grace with which she presented him with a golden goblet, uttering, at the same time, in silver accents, the words of greeting—"Wæs heal, hlaforð Cynnyng," "*Health to thee, Lord King,*" entirely subdued him. From her lips he immediately learnt the customary answer, "Drinc heal," and his fate was sealed.



Drayton, after detailing this scene, goes on to say that the enamoured monarch—

“Kuste hire<sup>1</sup> and fitte hire adoune, and glad dronk hire heil,  
And that was tho in this land the verst was-hail.  
As in langage of Saxoyne that me might ever iwrite,  
And so wel he paith the hole about, that he is not yet voryrte.”

From that time “was-heil” and “drinc-heil” were the usual phrases of quaffing among the English, though Drayton thinks the custom had long before existed, both in Saxony and other nations.

The dress of the Saxon ladies is thus described, and we may suppose Rowena appeared, on this memorable occasion, similarly attired:—“They wore linen, dyed of divers colours, under the gown, and to this part of the dress belonged those close sleeves seen under or within those of the upper garment. The gown frequently was embellished with bands of different colours, or embroidery about the knees and at the bottom. On their heads they wore a veil, coverchief, or hood, which, falling down upon the forehead, was carefully wrapped round the neck and shoulders; sometimes they wore over their shoulders a cloak, with a hole cut in the middle, for the purpose of passing the head through. Their shoes, commonly of black, were plain, and sometimes slit down the middle of the instep. The predominant colours for female dress were green, blue, and light red; sometimes pink and violet, but rarely perfect *white*.”<sup>2</sup> Purple was worn only by kings and queens.

Hengist himself is represented as of “pleasing address, engaging and condescending behaviour, and of sound judgment.”<sup>3</sup>

In “Smith and Meyrick’s Costumes” he thus appears: “With a four-pointed helmet, like those worn in France in the ninth century, and a breast-plate precisely similar to those worn in that country in the reigns of Lothair and Charles the Bold; some say he wore ‘scaly mail,’ and surcoat of fur. The chieftain’s spear was broad and heavy, his convex shield armed with a boss. His long red hair was worn flowing down; he was stout in person, and freckled. When unarmed, his head was adorned with a wreath of amber beads, and round his neck was suspended a golden torque. His banner was red, and exhibited ‘the picture of the white prancing steed,’ at once the hieroglyphic of his name, and a symbol of the deity he worshipped.”

As Hengist is said to be only about thirty at the time he arrived in Britain, his daughter Rowena must have been extremely young. At first, on Vortigern’s declaring his passion for her, the artful father pretended to think her too lowly for so great an alliance; this assumed opposition, of course, increased the ardour of the royal lover, and his entreaties soon convinced both father and daughter that the objection was merely fanciful.

The object of the Jute was attained, and almost immediately the marriage of Vortigern and Rowena took place.

<sup>1</sup> Winsemius, the historian of Friesland, relates with much gravity as a fact, that *kissing* was unknown in England till the fair Rowena, Hengist’s daughter, in the character of cupbearer, pressed the beaker with her lipkens, and saluted Vortigern with a kus-ên (a little kiss).—*Sir R. Phillips*.

<sup>2</sup> Smith and Meyrick.

<sup>3</sup> Rapin.

Vortigern had united himself previously to his marriage with Rowena, to a British lady of royal birth, by whom he had three sons, Vortimer, Categrin, and Pascentius, and one daughter.<sup>1</sup> This lady had been divorced to make way for the new marriage, and here the history of the Saxon invasion strongly resembles that of the Roman, four hundred years earlier. The divorced Queen of Vortigern may be compared to Boadicea, who was repudiated to make way for her husband to marry another: in these instances, as in that of the Spanish Florinda, the ill-treatment of a woman introduced the enemies of her country.

Vortigern's first wife was much loved by the people, more particularly because she was a Christian, while Rowena, her rival in the King's affections, was a lady of "uncowght beleue,"<sup>2</sup> in other words, a Pagan; moreover Vortigern had promised Rowena full liberty to exercise her own religion.<sup>3</sup>

As the rites of that religion are remarkable, a brief account of the idolatrous worship in which Rowena had been educated, may be excused.

The Saxon temples, in which their idols were worshipped,<sup>4</sup> were surrounded with inclosures, and it was considered profanation to throw a lance within the assigned boundary. The chief of the deities were the Sun and Moon, from whom, the former a female, and the latter a male deity, were named the two first days of their week. Tuesco, or Tiw, gave a name to the third day, but of him nothing is known. Wednesday was named from Woden, or Odin, the God of War, and renowned ancestor of Rowena herself, who is computed to have lived in the third century. Thor was another deity, and Friga, the wife of Woden, was venerated on Friday, as was Seterne on Saturday. There was besides Friga, several female deities, as Rheda and Eostre, to whom they sacrificed in March and April, Eostre giving name to the festival of Easter; and Herthus, or the Earth. There was a female power called an Elf, who appeared to have answered to Venus; Hera, the Goddess of Plenty, and Hilda, Goddess of War.<sup>5</sup> The offerings to these deities varied according to circumstances and seasons, consisting of cakes, of cattle, and sometimes even of human beings. The most celebrated and singular idol of the Saxons yet remains to be described. It stood at Marsburg, and bore the name of Irminsula. The edifice in which it was placed was spacious, elaborate, and magnificent, but had no roof. The idol itself, the largest in all Saxony, was constructed, it is thought, of wood, and represented an armed warrior; "its right hand held a banner, in which a red rose was conspicuous; its left presented a balance. The crest of its helmet was a cock; on its breast was engraven a bear, and the shield depending from its shoulders, exhibited a lion in a field full of flowers." Such was the extraordinary figure which was the principal object of adoration in the

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<sup>1</sup> The author of "*Britannia after the Romans*" thinks that Rowena was the Christian wife of a monarch who leaned strongly towards Druidism, and a queen most anxious to reconcile the British and Saxon tribes to each other.—*Miss Lawrence's History of Woman*.

<sup>2</sup> Fabian.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson.

<sup>4</sup> Turner.

<sup>5</sup> Turner; *History of the Anglo-Saxons*.

temple. Pictures of the Irminsula were to be found in other Saxon temples, which proves the high veneration with which it was regarded.

Both men and women served in the pagan temples of the Saxons; the former sacrificed, the latter divined and told fortunes. The priests, in the hour of battle, took their favourite image from its column, and carried it to the field, and after the conflict was over, the captives were immolated to the idol. There were certain days, also, on which the soldiery, clothed in armour, and brandishing an iron cestus, would ride round about their idol, and afterwards dismounting, kneel before it, and offer up prayers for success in their warfare.

The Irminsula was thrown down and broken, and the fame it had acquired destroyed by Charlemagne, in the year 772; its destruction occupied half the Gallic army three days, the rest being under arms; the vessels of the temple being appropriated, together with vast wealth, by the conquerors. The column on which the image had stood, being thrown into a wagon, was buried in the Weser, where it was found in the succeeding reign; and the Saxons attempting to rescue it, fought a battle on the spot called the Armensula. They were repulsed, and the image hastily thrown into the river; whence it was subsequently conveyed to the choir of a new church, built in the neighbourhood, at Hillesheim, and employed to hold lights at the festivals. After many ages of neglect, its rust and discoloration were removed by Meibomius and a canon of the church.<sup>1</sup>

Such were some of the extravagances of the Pagan idol-worship, which was introduced into Britain at the marriage of Rowena, and being protected and patronised by Vortigern whose chief idol was Rowena herself, threatened to choke the scattered seeds of Christianity which had sprung up in different parts of the island.

The first coming of Hengist had been, no doubt, welcomed by the helpless Britons as a deliverance from threatened bondage; the increase of his possessions might not, perhaps, have awakened jealousy, had not the advancement of a foreigner and a pagan to the position of Queen-Consort, and the consequent divorce of their Christian country-woman alarmed them, and pointed out the necessity of expostulation. Whatever the British nobles might have felt at first, they dissembled their indignation, and the earliest intimation of their feelings which Vortigern received was a visit from Wodine or Vodinus, Bishop of London, a man of singularly devout and exemplary character. That priest, having learnt that the Queen had been dismissed by her husband, went to him and remonstrated freely with him on the subject, telling him how great a crime he had committed in dismissing his lawful wife, who was a good and virtuous woman and excellent Christian; he added, moreover, that he had deeply offended against the laws of God and man, by marrying a Saxon, who was an enemy to the Christian faith, and whose father was aiming at the crown of Britain, and resolved to subdue it to the thralldom of the Saxons. Vortigern, abashed by the Bishop's honest reproof, acknowledged his crime, prayed God might pardon him, and made a confession of his guilt to the

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<sup>1</sup> Turner.



holy man, full of penitence, auguring well for the future. Upon this Hengist, who in an adjoining chamber had listened to all that had passed, came in with fury, and upbraided Vortigern for being so dejected after his marriage. To completely emancipate his son-in-law from such an adviser, he slew the Bishop and several other religious men who resided with the King, and would have killed his son Vortimer also, had he not saved his life by a precipitate flight.<sup>1</sup>

Vortigern was next excommunicated by St. Germanus and the whole synod of bishops, on account of his marriage with the heathen Princess Rowena.<sup>2</sup> His crimes and follies had rendered him so much an object of detestation among the people, that in the year 464 a General Assembly of the British States was convened by the nobles of London.<sup>3</sup> On this occasion Vortigern was upbraided as the author of all the country's calamities, and the crown being taken from his head was placed on that of his son Vortimer.<sup>4</sup> The deposed King was then sent as a prisoner into Wales, and Rowena, who had been also made captive, was confined in the Tower of London. The object of this severe treatment was to prevent any children of her's in future aspiring to the throne, to the exclusion of the issue of Vortigern's first wife; for Rowena, at the time of her imprisonment, was expecting to become a mother, and shortly after gave birth to a son.<sup>5</sup> This was a cruel reverse of fortune, but Rowena does not appear to have possessed acute feelings; beautiful as an angel as she is represented to have been, her character does not present us with any of the gentle virtues which adorn the sex, except, indeed, the persisting in a determination to adhere to the fortunes of her own family, which owed its aggrandisement to herself, may be considered as one of them.

Hengist, after learning the imprisonment of his daughter and her husband, had to arm himself against the united forces of the Picts, Scots, and Britons, who, headed by Vortimer, fought four battles; in one of which Horsa, on the side of the Saxons, and Categrin, brother of Vortimer, were slain fighting hand to hand,—a proof of the animosity which fired the rival chiefs.<sup>6</sup> Hengist, during the interval, spared neither age nor sex, burnt public and private edifices, slew the priests at the foot of their altars, and even nobles and bishops were sacrificed to his indignation.<sup>7</sup> In the end, however, fortune favoured Vortimer, and the Saxons, with Hengist, were forced to fly from the kingdom. During the six or seven years which followed, the British King employed himself in the restoration of Christianity, and rebuilt the churches which the Pagans had destroyed.<sup>8</sup> At the end of that time his life fell a sacrifice to the artifices of Rowena, who had bribed one of his attendants to poison him.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the best years of this dangerous beauty's life had been passed

<sup>1</sup> Weever, Scott. This scene is supposed to have taken place at Ambresbury in Wiltshire, and the great massacre of the Britons at Stonehenge, but antiquarians dispute on this point.

<sup>2</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>3</sup> Warrington, Scott.

<sup>4</sup> Fordun.

<sup>5</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>6</sup> Speed.

<sup>7</sup> Hume.

<sup>8</sup> Howel.

<sup>9</sup> Fordun, Brut. Tysilio, Howel.



in prison,<sup>1</sup> but it would seem that this confinement was not very rigorous, owing to the generosity of the disposition of her step-son.

Rowena was anxious to recover her lost power, and reflecting what disasters Vortimer had caused the Saxons in England,—that she was herself a captive, her husband deposed and in prison, and her father a fugitive from his possessions, she determined to procure the death of the royal Vortimer. To this step she was led by her father's instigations, and, it is thought, with the connivance of her infatuated husband.

Rowena employed as her agent on this occasion a young man, attendant on Vortigern, whom she engaged in her service by the promise of a great reward. The event is thus recorded:<sup>2</sup>—"Disguised as a gardener, the Queen's emissary appeared one morning before the King, when he was taking the air in his garden, and presented him with a nosegay of flowers sprinkled with poison." As soon as Vortimer was sensible of its effects, and perceived that his death was inevitable, he called the nobility into his presence, and exhorted them to a manly defence of their country. He made it his last request that they should erect his sepulchre on the seashore, on the spot where the Saxons were accustomed to land. Some say that his tomb was prepared during his lifetime, at the entrance into Thanet, the scene of their last fatal struggle, in which Vortimer was the conqueror; and that the monument was called *Lapis Titulo*, in modern times "the Stoner."<sup>3</sup> However the King directed that his remains should be deposited therein, under the impression that the image and relics of a dead warrior would inspire the same terror he had infused when alive. For some reason not assigned, the Britons disregarded this request, and interred the heroic prince at Caer Ludd, or London.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps some of the British nobles were prevented from complying with the last wishes of Vortimer, by the influence of Rowena, who no sooner found that her scheme had answered all her hopes, than she contrived, by flattery, to persuade the nobility to re-establish her husband upon the throne. This step was decided upon in a general council of state; and as soon as Vortigern was again made King, he sent into Germany, desiring Hengist to come over secretly, with a few attendants, lest if he came in any other manner, it might cause the Britons to rebel.—A. D. 461. The machinations of Rowena were thus far successful; her husband had recovered his crown, she was again a Queen; and her infant son, who had been born during her solitary sojourn in the Tower, was acknowledged the heir to the kingdom of Britain.<sup>5</sup> Under this promising aspect of affairs for the Saxons, Hengist was encouraged to set sail for Britain, with three thousand armed followers.<sup>6</sup> If the departure of her father had made Rowena "sad," as the historian informs us,<sup>7</sup> his return must have filled her heart with joy.

<sup>1</sup> Scott.

<sup>2</sup> Evans's *Mirror of Past Ages*, from an ancient MS.

<sup>3</sup> Warrington.

<sup>4</sup> The following authors are unanimous in believing Vortimer to have been poisoned:—Evans ("Mirror," p. 106); Verstegan, c. 5, p. 129; Fabian, p. 76; Matthew Westminster, p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> Warrington. Langhorne says that no children were born to Vortigern by Rowena.

<sup>6</sup> Fordun.

<sup>7</sup> Tanner.

Hengist now asserted his friendship for Vortigern, and his desire to support the claims of his own grandchild, the son of Rowena, whom he feared might be slain by the Britons, and who, Vortigern being aged and infirm, and unlikely to have more heirs, had the only claim to the throne.

The weak and superstitious Vortigern is said to have consulted Merlin as to the fate of himself and his son by Rowena, and received for answer that they should be burnt to death by Uther and Ambrose. These princes had a prior claim to Vortigern on the British throne. Their brother Constans, who had entered a monastery when a child, was, by Vortigern's contrivance, brought thence, on the death of Constantine, his royal father, to assume the crown,—A. D. 448.<sup>1</sup> Vortigern had afterwards caused him to be murdered, and seized on the vacant throne, to the prejudice of the junior princes, Uther and Ambrose, who, it was supposed, fled for safety into Bretagne.<sup>2</sup> This, however, was not the case, for Ambrose was detained in Britain by his mother; and is known afterwards as “Emris Wledig,” or “Emperor,” the title borne by his illustrious ancestor, Maximus: this was his Welsh title; the Roman one was Ambrose Aurelian.

After the departure of the Romans from Britain, many private Roman families had remained established here, forming a sort of clan of their own. The mother of Ambrose was one of these; her birth was very noble, for her parents were said to have worn the imperial purple,<sup>3</sup> but the name of her father has been purposely suppressed, though he is called a Roman chieftain, and of consular dignity. She is accused of having violated her vows as a vestal virgin.<sup>4</sup> This, however, seems to have been a fiction, invented by the enemies of the mother of Ambrose. Both herself and children had been educated by Guiteline, Archbishop of London; and Cirencester, the Roman city, is said to have been the scene of her espousals to their father Constantine.

On the death of Constans, her eldest son, his widowed<sup>5</sup> Queen, dreading that the cruel Vortigern should aim at the destruction of her other children, had lived in a state of complete seclusion. The young Ambrose gave such extraordinary evidence of his mathematical powers, that it was spread abroad as a rumour by the superstitious common people, that he was the offspring of a demon in human form, who had associated with his mother. The Queen desiring to conceal the rank of his father, favoured the conceit, and thus the youth early obtained the name of Merlin, “the Magician.”<sup>6</sup>

Vortigern had, by the advice of his nobles determined to build an impregnable fortress in Snowdon, and collected the necessary materials to accomplish his design. To his surprise, these all disappeared in one

<sup>1</sup> Constantine, son of Solomon, King of Armorica, was elected and crowned at Silcestre, A. D. 433.—*Geoffrey of Monmouth, Holinshed.*

<sup>2</sup> Turner.

<sup>3</sup> Bede.

<sup>4</sup> Nennius.

<sup>5</sup> The emissaries of Vortigern, entering the bedchamber of young Constans, cut off his head, and carried it bleeding to Vortigern, who, feigning the utmost horror and astonishment, immediately ordered the deaths of the murderers! His next act was to assume the regal power.—*Warrington.*

<sup>6</sup> Langhornii Chronicon.

night. On consulting with his wise men as to the cause, they told him the building would never stand unless it was sprinkled with the blood of a child who was born without a father. The country was searched far and wide, when a cluster of boys at play were overheard to charge one of their companions with being an "unbegotten knave." This child was the Merlin of whom we have been speaking, and who, with his mother, was instantly brought into the presence of the royal Vortigern, his greatest enemy. The Queen was forced to keep up her deceptive story, by owning the youth the offspring of the being of supernatural powers; and Merlin was sentenced to be sacrificed. In this cruel emergency, the wisdom of the boy was the means of saving his life. He confounded all the wise men of Vortigern by his questions; and having explained why Vortigern had failed in his erection of the castle, by founding it on a morass, had the good fortune to be set at liberty. Merlin obtained great reputation by the circumstance alluded to, and many prophecies were afterwards imputed to him, the repetition of which was forbidden, in after-days, by the Council of Trent.<sup>1</sup>

When Vortigern, desirous of learning his future destiny, and that of the son of Rowena, appealed to the royal prophet, he received the answer which sincerity alone could have dictated,—a quality for which Ambrose Aurelian was ever remarkable, and distinguished by it from his contemporary chieftains.<sup>2</sup> This excellent prince was afterwards leader of the Britons against the Saxons;<sup>3</sup> his valour is said to have been equal to his modesty, and the latter was conspicuous in so learned a prince. It is particularly stated that he was skilled in mathematics and astronomy;<sup>4</sup> and to him the town of Ambresbury, in Wiltshire, owed its origin.

The British nobles had, on the arrival of so many armed warriors, under Hengist, felt very indignant, and prepared for war. Rowena informed her father, as usual, of what was to be expected; who sent to Vortigern, offering to retain such only of his followers as the King pleased; but requested an interview on the subject. Thus, under the appearance of peace, he concealed the most artful scheme.

Vortigern is said to have accepted an invitation from Hengist to a banquet at Ambresbury, with about three hundred of his nobles; and on this occasion it was, that the whole of the followers of the British King were slain by the Saxons, and Vortigern himself detained a prisoner. Among those slain was Vodinus, who, at Vortimer's instigation, had formerly reproved Vortigern for divorcing his Queen and marrying Rowena.<sup>5</sup> The haughty and insolent King, who is truly described as

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Pennant (from Nennius). "There were two Myrddins, or Merlins; one the minister and archbishop of Ambrosius, who succeeded Vortigern, and built Stonehenge, called Myrddin Ambrosius, and whose skill in bringing the stones from Ireland, obtained him the name of Enchanter; and the Myrddin, or Morvyn, a British poet and prophet, contemporary with Taliessin, who lived in the following century, and died in Bardsey."—*Sir R. Phillips*.

<sup>2</sup> Turner.

<sup>3</sup> Hume.

<sup>4</sup> Gibbon.

<sup>5</sup> Langhornii Chronicon.

"neither wise in counsel, nor experienced in war," oppressed by the Saxons, and pursued by Aurelius, who took up arms after the death of Vortimer, fled for refuge into Wales, to a castle among the mountains of Caernarvonshire.

The valley of Vortigern (Nant y Gyrthyrn) is described as an immense hollow, to approach which says Pennant, "we ascend from Nefyn for a considerable way up the side of the high hill, and after a short ride on level ground, quit our horses. Fancy cannot frame a place more fit for a retreat from the knowledge of mankind, or more apt to inspire one with full hopes of security from any pursuit; embosomed in a lofty mountain, on both sides bounded by stony steeps, on which no vegetables appear, but the blasted heath and stunted gorse; the hind side exhibits a most tremendous front of black precipice, with the loftiest peak of the mountain Eist soaring above; and the only opening to this secluded spot is towards the sea, a northern aspect, where that chilling wind exerts all its fury, and half freezes during winter, the few inhabitants."<sup>1</sup>

Nennius places the scene of Vortigern's retreat near the Teibi, in Cardiganshire; but (says Pennant) "I believe that the historian not only mistakes the spot, but even the manner of his death. His life had been profligate, the monks, therefore, were determined that he should not die the common death of all men, and accordingly made him perish with signal marks of the vengeance of Heaven." The guilty monarch was, it is said, destroyed in the castle wherein he had taken refuge, by lightning, together with the rest of the inmates; or else they were burnt to ashes, together with the structure itself, by the contrivance of the Britons.<sup>2</sup> Pennant proceeds thus with his description of the spot: "Just above the sea is a high and verdant natural mount, but the top and sides worked by art. The first flattened, the sides marked with eight prominent ribs from top to bottom. On this might have been the residence of the unfortunate Prince, of which time has destroyed every other vestige. Till the beginning of the last century, a tumulus, of stone within, and externally covered with turf, was to be seen here; it was known by the name of Bedd Gwrtheyrn. Tradition having regularly delivered down the report of this having been the place of Vortigern's interment, the inhabitants of the parish, perhaps instigated by their minister, Mr. Hugh Roberts, a person of curiosity, dug into the cairn, and found in it a stone coffin, containing the bones of a tall man."<sup>3</sup> This gives a degree of credibility to the tradition, especially as no other bones were found with it,—no other tumuli on the spot; a proof, at least, of respect to the rank of the person, and that the place was deserted after the death of the royal fugitive about the year 465."

Rowena's history is little noticed after the seclusion of Vortigern.

<sup>1</sup> The glen is tenanted by three families, who raise oats, and keep a few cattle, sheep, and goats, but seem to have great difficulty in getting their little produce to market.—*Pennant*.

<sup>2</sup> *Howel*.

<sup>3</sup> *Kennett's Parochial Antiquities*.



That she survived her husband, and still persevered in her feelings of resentment against the Britons, was believed, since she is accused of the death of Ambrose Aurelian, who is said to have been poisoned, in revenge for his share in her husband's death; "for she was very skilful in the art of poisoning."<sup>1</sup> Some writers, however, ascribe the deed to Pascentius, brother of Vortimer, who would be his rival for the crown; and a third account represents the philosopher King to have been slain in battle, fighting against his Saxon foes, and states that Stonehenge was erected over the spot where his remains were deposited, or else to commemorate the slaughter of those noble Britons who were massacred by the Saxon Hengist.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver Matthew's Abbreviation of divers most true and ancient Britannie Chronicles, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Howel, Med. Hist. Ang.

## GUENEVER I.

The beauty of the three Guenevers—Parentage of Arthur's first Queen—The Earl of Cornwall—Tintagel Castle described—Uther the Terrible, and his love for Igwerna—The Merlins—Gorolois and his wife—Uther marries the widow of Gorolois—Birth of Arthur—The Comet—Pendragon—Love of Arthur for his wife—She is carried off by the Duke of Somerset—Confined at Glastonbury—The Abbot obtains her release—She accompanies Arthur in an expedition against the Scots—First of the Twelve Battles—Guenever taken prisoner—She dies at Castle Dunbar—Tomb of Guenever and her maidens.

THE three Queens of Arthur the Great, the poetically-immortal adversary of the Saxons, were alike remarkable for their personal beauty, and for being honored with the name of Guenever, most probably in addition to some other appellative, and in reference to their pre-eminent loveliness. That they were, as some writers have imagined, but one individual, is clearly an error; as not only does their history, on careful examination, connect itself with the three successive portions or epochs of the life of their warrior-lord, but their parentage was different, and the place of their interment dissimilar. In giving them a place among the Queens of England, the opinion is followed of those authors who state that they were three separate princesses, bearing the name of Guenever, who, in turn, shared the regal honours as Queen-Consort.<sup>1</sup>

Every one of the many different readings of the word Guenever<sup>2</sup> has reference to beauty: it expresses "white as silver." A dazzling whiteness of skin, produced by the humidity of the climate, is said to have been a striking characteristic of woman in Britain at all times. "With her complexion ruddy, eyes blue, her hair long, and of a yellow colour, suffered to flow carelessly over the shoulders." The sex is described as "tall in stature, stately and dignified in manners, and in personal strength and vigour of mind so nearly approached to that of man, that softer sentiments often subsided, and made way for respect and awe."

High birth was intimated by the addition of Gwen, Vren, or Bren, to the name of any person. Eight Scottish monarchs bore the denomination of Eugenius, or Huganus,—the Owen, or Oeneus, of the Welsh, Evenus, or Eneas. The woman's name which corresponds is Gwenus;<sup>3</sup> the same as Venus, the goddess-mother of that hero Æneas, from whom the British kings, as late as Henry VII., pretended to derive their descent. We are expressly told that Arthur's first wife was so remarkably beau-

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<sup>1</sup> Langhornii Chron., Lewis's Hist. of Great Britain.

<sup>2</sup> Camden. See Life of Gwenissa, p. 9?

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

tiful as to excel all the other ladies of Britain; on which account she was called Gwinne, "a word, in the Welsh tongue, signifying *fair*."

This beautiful Queen of the Britons was daughter of Corytus, or Gwryd Gwent;<sup>1</sup> though some go further a-field, and say that her father was king of Biscay.<sup>2</sup> She was of Roman descent, and had been educated, up to the time of her marriage, by Cador, Duke of Cornwall, who was her near relative.<sup>3</sup> Arthur, having established peace, married "a fayre ladye, and a gentel, that Cador, the Earl of Cornwall, had long since nourished in his chamber." We are not exactly told that Guenever was crowned, but that she was "made Queen;" therefore she no doubt enjoyed the honours of being consort of Arthur.

Guenever, it seems, was brought up from infancy by Cador, Duke of Cornwall,<sup>4</sup> called "her near relative." Cador was son of Gorolois, Duke or Earl of Cornwall, by Igwerna, the mother of King Arthur, and his "*own chamber*," or residence, was the famous Tintagel Castle, in Cornwall.

This castle, celebrated in romantic annals as the birth-place of Arthur himself, thus appears to have been the abode of his Queen during childhood. Carew describes the Castle of Tintagel thus:—"Half the build-ings were raised on the continent, and the other half on an island, continued together, within man's remembrance, by a drawbridge, but now divorced, by the downefaln steepe cliffes on the farther side, which, though it shut out the sea from its wonted recourse, hath yet more strengthened the island; for in passing thither, you must first descend with a dangerous declynyn, and then make a worse ascent, by a path,

<sup>1</sup> Langhorne.

<sup>2</sup> Stowe.

<sup>3</sup> Biog. Brit. Caxton says she was his own cousin,—a fact corroborated by Stowe.

<sup>4</sup> Before Athelstan's time, the Earls of Cornwall retained the title of Duke or King; that monarch annexed it to his crown, but allowed the Duke or Earl the privilege of royal jurisdiction and crown right, the giving of liberty to send burgesses to Parliament, and appointing a sheriff, admiral, and other officers, which continued in the duchy till 1337, when the Parliament settled the duchy on the eldest son of the King of England, at the time when Edward the Black Prince was created Duke of Cornwall.

The eldest son of the King of England is born Duke of Cornwall, in respect to which he is of age at the very day of his birth, so as to claim living and seizing of the said dukedom. This, however, was first settled on the King's eldest son by Edward III.; and it is to be observed that it does not descend by virtue of that monarch's grant to the heir of the crown of England in general, but to the son, and him the first-begotten son of the King. So Richard de Bourdeaux, son of the Black Prince, who died without coming to the crown, was not Duke of Cornwall by birth, but was created so by charter; nor was Henry VIII., after the death of his brother, Prince Arthur, Duke of Cornwall, because he was not the eldest-born son. Sir Walter Raleigh estimated the settled revenue of the Prince of Wales, arising from the mines in Cornwall, at £20,000 sterling.

The Earls of Cornwall made Launceston Castle, Liskeard, Rostormel, and Moresk, at different times their place of abode; but since Edward III.'s time, when Trematon came into their possession, these residences ceased to be made use of, and fell into decay and ruin. The ancient British dialect was spoken in Cornwall till the time of Henry VIII., when the introduction of the English liturgy paved the way for its disuse.—*Magna. Brit.*

through his stickleness occasioning, and through his steepness threatening, the ruine of your life, with the falling of your foote. At the top, two or three terrifying steps give you entrance to the hill, which supplieth pasture for sheepe and couyes; upon the same I saw a decayed chappell. Under the island runs a cave, thorow which you may row at full sea, but not without a kind of horreur at the uncouthnesse of the place." Norden more particularly describes the island as being "by a very narrow, rockye, and wyndinge waye up the steepe sea-clyffe, under which the sea-waves wallow, and so assaile the foundation of the ile, as may astonish an unstable brayne to consider the perill, for the least slippe of the foote sendes the whole body into the devouring sea; and the worste of all is highest of all, nere the gate of entrance into the hill, where the offensive stones so exposed hang over the head, as while a man respecteth his footing, he indaungers his head, and looking to save the head, indaungers the footing. According to the old proverbe, 'He must have eyes, that will scale Tintagel.'"<sup>1</sup>

Secluded and wild as was this spot, the rumour of the charms of the fair Igwerna, mistress of the castle, had spread far and wide, and had reached, among others, Uther Pen-Dragon, "the Terrible," the reigning Prince descendant of Asclepiodatus, the famed Duke of Cornwall, who was contemporary with St. Helena.

Uther, who had just become a widower, is said to have first beheld Igwerna, the greatest beauty of her time, at a banquet held in London. He sought, without success, to win her regard by every means his passion could suggest; but the lady fled from his importunities, and, with her husband, Gorolois, returned to Tintagel Castle, whither she was pursued by Uther in disguise. The magical skill of Merlin<sup>2</sup> was called to his

<sup>1</sup> Magna Brit. Norden says that most of the buildings were in ruins, but by the view annexed to this account, it appears that those on the mainland were standing in his time. Leland says: "Shepe now fede within the dungeon; the residews of the buildings of the castle be sore wetherbeten and yn ruine, but it hath bene a large thing."

<sup>2</sup> The names of two Merlins are given in the Ancient Triad, in conjunction with that of Taliesin, as the three principal bards of the isle of Britain: —

Merlin Ambrose.

Merlin, the son of Morfyn (Merlin Silvester, or Caledonicus).

And Taliessin, the chief of bards. [Taliesin, in the sixth century, wrote a poem on the Battle of the Trees, which is yet in existence; and in which he likens the words in the Ogham, or secret letters of the Welsh, to twigs or branches of trees. Mr. Darces seems to think that this is an allusion to the original system.]

Merlin Ambrose, or the Magician, already mentioned in the Life of Rowena, was a Druid of British or Welsh birth. Merlin Silvestris, born in Caledonia, also a celebrated Druid, lived about a century later, about 570, and dwelt in the city of Alclud. The fact that Magi, or Druids, dwelt at the court of Brudi, who was converted and baptised by St. Columba, in 536, proves that the Order had not been so completely extirpated in Britain by the Romans as is generally supposed. [Toland's History of the Druids.] Rodarchus the Munificent, who reigned in Britain in the sixth century (A. D. 561), had two wives — one named Llangwrith, and the other Ganiada. Merlin the Prophet was brother of Ganiada: he had accompanied Feredarus, General of the Venedati, when he made war on Guenolous, the King, and so also had Rodarchus, his brother-in-law, and is thus noticed in



aid, who pourtrayed to the lady, by means of a shadow which he raised on the wall, the form of one who was destined to be her future husband. Uther, at length, disguised as Gorolois, deceived the beautiful Igwerna,<sup>1</sup> and it is said that Arthur was the offspring of this deceit. Some attribute the story to the policy of Gorolois himself, who desired to conceal his wife's frailty or misfortune; but the fact that Uther was compelled to the artifice of representing her husband, attests the truth and loyal integrity of the deluded fair one.<sup>2</sup> Not long after Gorolois fell by the hand of Uther, and that prince immediately married his widow.<sup>3</sup>

The birth of Arthur took place at Tintagel Castle,<sup>4</sup> a few hours only before the death of Gorolois, the event being attended by the appearance of a comet, which Uther beheld at Winchester, and which prodigy was explained by Merlin, whom the king had sent for, to denote the birth of a son, who should arrive at great power; and also of a daughter, whose sons and grandsons should successively enjoy the kingdom of Britain.

At Tintagel Castle is yet shown the hall and the bed of King Arthur, his way to church, &c.; and in the neighbourhood everything grand, uncommon or inexplicable, is attributed to him.<sup>5</sup> The author of the Legend of King Arthur says:—

“Of Brutus' blood, in Brittain borne,  
King Arthur I am to name;  
Through Christendome and Heathynesse,  
Well knowne is my worthy fame.

“And in the Castle of Tintagill  
King Uther mee begate,  
Of Agyana<sup>a</sup> a beauteous ladye,  
And come of hie estate.”

Both Guenever and Arthur could lay claim to a Roman ancestry, in token of which Arthur bore the celebrated surname assumed first by his father Uther the Terrible—that of Pendragon, which, in the British tongue, signifies Dragon's Head. The princes to which this epithet was appropriated are spoken of by the poet as

“Pendragon Kings of Uther's royal race!”

Geoffr y of Monmouth:—“Lo! then comes another from the hall of Rodarchus, King of the Cambri, to meet the conqueror, who had married Ganiada, and was happy in a beautiful wife. She was the sister of Merlin. And Rodarchus orders garments, hawks, hounds, swift steeds, gold, shining gems, and goblets, which Guierlaudus had carved in the city Sigeni, to be brought, and presents and offers them one by one to the prophet.” “We thus see,” says Toland, translator of this passage, “that Merlin the Wild was no mean person. His sister Ganiada was nobly married, and he himself, for his vaticination, which was a prominent part of the Druidical office, received a present which might have suited an emperor.”

<sup>1</sup> Thrall's Retrospections. The name of Igwerna, Arthur's mother, signifies an eel or serpent, and perhaps the famed banner of her husband had some allusion to the circumstance.

<sup>2</sup> Antiquities of Glastonbury; Fabian. Buchanan likens the tale to that of Jupiter and Alcmena.

<sup>3</sup> Biog. Brit.; Merlin's Prophecies.

<sup>4</sup> Geoff. of Monmouth.

<sup>5</sup> Borlase, Hearne.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Uther's famous ensign was the picture of a dragon with a golden head. The dragon, being considered an emblem of destruction, was depicted on the Roman standards of that epoch, and Uther, desirous of attaching the remnant of the Romans in Britain to his interests, adopted the fierce ensign to signify his descent from their emperors. The dragon had been displayed on the banners of Rome in an exhibition given to the people by the Emperor Gallien, and at the time of Uther, similar shows or spectacles were common throughout the remotest provinces of the Roman Empire; in Britain they were patronized by Uther, and afterwards by his son, King Arthur.<sup>1</sup> Cadwallader, their descendant, afterwards bore the red dragon on his banner, and Henry the Seventh, proud of his descent from the Roman line of princes, followed this example at the battle of Bosworth,<sup>2</sup> which brought in the line of Tudor, the ancestors of Queen Victoria.

In spite of all this, the very existence of Arthur has been questioned, though the son of Henry the Seventh was named after him, and many ancient writers attest the truth of his history. At the time of Uther's death,<sup>3</sup> Arthur was only fifteen or eighteen years of age, and from that date, A. D. 516, he reigned for a period of twenty-six years; the people he ruled were the Silures, and he is termed King of Gwent,<sup>4</sup> then the British metropolis of the nation.

GuenEVER the Fair had no children by Arthur, who, however, is said to have "loved her wonder well and dearly."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the battle between Edmond Ironside and Canute, the Red Dragon of Wessex was unfurled. Henry III. placed it as his standard in Westminster Abbey, prior to his visit there, and had it carried before him at the battle of Lewes; and Edward III. also exhibited it at the famous field of Cressy. — Willemonte's Regal Heraldry.

<sup>2</sup> This banner of Henry VII., which afterwards gave rise to the office of Rouge Dragon among the heralds, was of white and green silk, in imitation of the one Cadwallader had used in his wars, who had singularly enough believed that, at some future period, one of his posterity should wear the English crown. The dragon and the greyhound were the supports of the royal arms of Henry VII. and Henry VIII.: the former, as soon as he became king, having procured a true statement of his descent from Cadwallader. — Pennant.

Juliana Berners says that Arthur bore "three dragons, and over that another shield with three crowns."

Another national emblem, *the leek*, is said to have been first used at this epoch. In the days of King Arthur, St. David [uncle of Arthur — he was Archbishop of Menevia] won a great victory over the Saxons, having ordered every one of his soldiers to place a leek in his cap, for the sake of distinction; in memory whereof, the Welsh to this day wear a leek on the first of March. — Walpole.

"I like the leeke above all herbes and flowers;  
When first we wore the same, the field was ours.  
The leeke is white and greene, whereby is ment.  
That Brittaines are both stout and eminent.  
Next to the lion and the unicorn,  
The leeke the fairest embleym that is worne."

*Harleian MS.*, 1977.

<sup>3</sup> Uther is said to have died from drinking the water of a poisoned well.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Borlase, Howel, Kippis, Buchanan, Hearne.

<sup>5</sup> Caxton.

A strange event is on record as having called forth the affection and courage of Arthur in his wife's behalf. Melvasius, Duke of Somerset, had by stratagem succeeded in carrying off the Queen from her husband, and kept her confined during the space of a year, in a castle near Glastonbury. As soon as the brave and injured King discovered the place of Guenever's concealment, he hastily collected his friends in Cornwall and Devonshire, and besieged the disloyal prince. While, however, one party was assaulting the town, and the other defending it, the monks, headed by the Abbot of Glastonbury and Gildas Albanus, fearing the consequence of this intestine discord, entered into the midst of the contest, and persuaded Melvasius to restore Guenever to her husband. For their successful mediation on this occasion, the monks were rewarded by both parties with a gift of considerable territory.<sup>1</sup>

Guenever afterwards accompanied her husband in an expedition against the Scots. On this occasion Arthur fought the first of the twelve famous battles ascribed to him, which took place on the banks of the river Douglas, in Lennox:<sup>2</sup> he four times encountered his foes in the same locality. In one of these fierce struggles "20,000 Picts and Scots were slain on one side, and 30,000 Britons on the other;"<sup>3</sup> so great was the slaughter, that the river was dyed with the blood of the slain, whose bodies were borne down its banks with the stream to the sea. Next day the British camp was rifled, and many rich spoils taken. Among the prisoners was Queen Guenever, wife of Arthur, with a great number of ladies, her attendants, and other gentlewomen. All the booty was divided by lot among the conquerors; the captive queen and her maidens, with several noble prisoners, and much spoil, fell to the share of the Picts, by whom they were conveyed to Angus, and secured in the Castle of Dunbar, a

<sup>1</sup> Langhorne's Chron.; Turner from Caradoc ap Llancarvon.

<sup>2</sup> Stowe.

<sup>3</sup> Holinshed, by mistake, places this engagement in 542. He says it was fought on the banks of the Humber; and that in it both Arthur and Modred, his nephew, were killed.

Aspatria is a long straggling village, standing on the ridge of a hill. In removing the earth of a barrow which stood on a rising ground, called Beacon Hill, about two hundred yards north of the village, in the year 1790, a human skeleton was found in a sort of rude chest, or kistvaen, formed by two large cobble-stones at each side and one at each end. The skeleton measured seven feet from the head to the ankle-bone; the feet were decayed and rotted off, and the other bones soon mouldered on exposure to the air. On the left side, near the shoulder, was a broad sword, five feet in length, the guard of which was elegantly inlaid with flowers; on the right side lay a dirk, or dagger, one foot and a half in length; the handle appeared to have been studded with silver. Part of a gold fibula, or buckle; an ornament for the end of a belt, a piece of which adhered to it; a broken battle-axe; a bit, shaped like a modern snaffle; and part of a spur, were also discovered here. On the stones that enclosed the west side of the kistvaen, were various figures, rudely sculptured, but principally representing circles, having a cross within each relief. The learned antiquary, Hayman Rooke, Esq., from whose account these particulars are extracted, was induced to suppose, from the above emblematical delineations, that the person here deposited was interred soon after the dawning of Christianity; and also to infer, from the rich ornaments contained in his sepulchre, that he was a chieftain of considerable rank. This has been sometimes considered the tomb of Arthur. — Britton and Brayley.

place of great strength, where they remained in confinement the rest of their lives,"<sup>1</sup> The ill-fated Queen did not long survive this sad stroke of fortune; she died at Castle Dunbar, and was buried in the fields of a town called Megle, in the county of Angus,<sup>2</sup> about ten miles from Dundee.<sup>3</sup> Arthur is said to have in person attended the funeral obsequies of Guenever, over whose remains a sumptuous tomb was afterwards erected.<sup>4</sup> The ladies who had shared her captivity were, at their death, interred in tombs placed around that of their Queen and mistress. The tombs of Guenever and her maidens were yet pointed out in the days of Holinshed; as that historian relates, and from him we learn that a story was current even then respecting the sepulchre of the Queen, viz., that if any woman should chance to tread upon it, she would remain barren, as Guenever the Queen herself had been. "In consequence," says Langhorne,<sup>5</sup> "the women regard that monument of antiquity as a pestilent place, not even venturing so much as to look upon it, not only fearing the tradition for themselves, but teaching the same to their daughters, and bidding them also to beware of its influence."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Scott.<sup>2</sup> Rapin.<sup>3</sup> Scott.<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Langhorne places the death of Guenever I. in 511—the year in which Æscus, the Saxon King of Kent, died; but Arthur did not become king till 516, according to general history.

<sup>6</sup> Langhorne, Hector Boetius, Holinshed.



## GUENEVER II.

Bridal festivities of Guenever, daughter of Uther ap Credawgal, at Carlisle—Arthur's Chamber—The Round Table—The Knights—The salt—The minstrels—Their accomplishments—The lady in her bower—The sweet key of Gwynedd—Customs at feasts—Grandeur of Arthur—Arthur a Christian—Arthur and Guenever in Brittany—The Fairy Morgana—The Coronation at Caerleon—Concourse of Kings—Guenever and the White Pigeon—Great ceremonies—Dubricius struck with the vanity of worldly grandeur—Retires to a cell—Arthur desires to be buried beside Guenever.

THE bridal festivities of the second Queen of Arthur, who bore the same name as her predecessor, that of Guenever,<sup>1</sup> were destined to form the theme of many a quaint and courtly ballad, familiarly known in modern times. This Guenever, who was daughter of Uther ap Credawgal, was united to Arthur at Carlisle, where might be seen as late as the times immediately preceding the Conquest, an ancient building, situated near the Church of St. Cuthbert, denominated Arthur's Chamber, supposed to have been part of the mansion of the British monarch.<sup>2</sup> The following lines from the ballad of the Marriage of Sir Gawain, allude to Guenever :—

“ King Arthur he lives in merry Carleile,  
And seemly is to see ;  
And there with him Queen Genever,  
Yt bride so blithe of blee.

“ And there with him, Queen Genever,  
Yt bride so bright in bower ;  
And all his barons about him stooode,  
Yt were both stiff and stoure.

“ King Arthur welcomed them there right all,  
And Genever, his queene,  
With all the Knights of the Round Table,  
Most seemly to be seene.”

The date of these second nuptials of Arthur is given as 511; the battle of Bannesdown Hill, which overlooks the vale of Bath, having been fought immediately before.<sup>3</sup> As this, the twelfth battle fought by Arthur against the Saxons, was crowned with victory, the King, desirous of commemorating the occasion, had established that famous order of knight-

<sup>1</sup> Langhorne's Chron.

<sup>2</sup> Britton and Brayley's Cumberland.

<sup>3</sup> Langhorne, Howel, Camden, Stowe.

hood whose members were designated Knights of the Round Table. The motto assigned to the order was characteristic of an ancient Briton: "Spread be my board, round as the horizon, and ample as my heart, that there may be no first or last; for odious is distinction, where merit is equal."<sup>1</sup> The number of these knights was limited to twenty-four, the King himself making the twenty-fifth.<sup>2</sup> Lothaire, husband of Queen Anna, Arthur's sister, was the first knight created by Arthur;<sup>3</sup> a great compliment to his brother-in-law, who is described as "a worthy prince, hardy, bounteous, manly, and right chivalrous." The creation of similar orders, on occasions of public rejoicing, had been customary from the earliest periods of our history; and several cities, among which may be mentioned Windsor, have laid claim to being the scene of the earliest investiture of this order. At Winchester, which disputes the point with Windsor, there may yet, says Evans, be seen "King Arthur's Round Table,"<sup>4</sup> hanging in the great hall, where the Saxon kings were subsequently accustomed to hold their feasts; this hall is supported by marble pillars, and is in the King's House, on the west side of the city of Winchester. The table, which bears the name of the monarch, is formed of one solid piece of wood, round which are cut several names in the Saxon characters, though only one, that of Lancelot, is legible,—a knight who takes a prominent part in the history of Guenever, the third of Arthur's Queens.

At Penrith a large circle may still be seen, which, after the lapse of centuries, retains the name of King Arthur's Round Table. It is supposed that this monarch introduced the fashion of round tables afterwards into Gaul, as they became very prevalent in that country, where every knight had at *his back* a squire with his armour in waiting.<sup>5</sup> This royal military order seems to have cultivated music; for a tune, called the "Prelude of the Salt,"<sup>6</sup> was always played whenever the salt-cellar was

<sup>1</sup> Sir R. Phillips.

<sup>2</sup> Leland, Pennant.

<sup>3</sup> Harding.

<sup>4</sup> Evans's Notes to Old Ballads. When Edward the First conquered Wales, in 1284, he held a Round Table, and celebrated his victories with dance and tournament. The concourse of English nobles on the occasion was prodigious, and numerous foreigners likewise graced the assembly with their presence.—*Pennant*.

<sup>5</sup> Marie de France, an Anglo-Norman poetess of the thirteenth century, the contemporary of Henry the Third of England, whose famous "lays" are in the British Museum among the Harleian Collection, No. 978, has one, the fifth, called "The Lay of Lanval," a knight of King Arthur's Round Table, who, being falsely accused by the Queen of having insulted her beauty, is, by the orders of Arthur, tried for the offence at Cardiff, and delivered by a beneficent fairy, who conveys him to the isle of Avalon. There are in all 646 verses on the subject. M. le Grand has translated this lay into prose in his "Fables." There is also an ancient English metrical version of it, by Thomas Chestre.—*Hay's Biography*.

<sup>6</sup> Salt was, from the earliest times, highly esteemed, and admitted into religious ceremonies. As a mark of league and friendship, Jews, Greeks, and Romans held it sacred. Formerly, on Ascension Day, the old inhabitants of Nantwich piously sang a hymn of thanksgiving "for the blessing of the brine;" and Mr. Pennant, who thinks the custom of Saxon origin, says "that a very ancient pit there, called the 'Old Brine,' was also held in great veneration, and till within these few years, was annually, on that festival, bedecked with boughs, flowers, and garlands, and was encircled by a jovial band of young people, celebrating the day with song and dance."

placed before King Arthur's Knights at his Round Table. The nuptials of Guenever II. were graced by many gaieties; not only were the knights of the Round Table established on the occasion, but not any of the ceremonies usually observed at the marriage of the ancient British princes were neglected.

No public festivity, great feast, or wedding, was duly solemnized in Wales, without the attendance of the bards and minstrels. There was one class of musicians, a member of which was especially appointed to attend on the nuptial festivity. This musician was required to be a ready waiter at table, and also an expert carver of every species of fowl. At the weddings of any of the royal family, his office was to wait on the bride.

A picture in an ancient MS. of the British Museum, represents Arthur and his Queen at table in their royal robes, with their crowns, and surrounded by their attendants: in the front of the picture is a musician playing on what appears to be a *violin*, while a page on bended knees, offers a cup of refreshing beverage, as the reward of his minstrelsy.

The court bard lodged with the governor of the palace: the Prince was accustomed to bestow on him an ivory chessboard; the Princess, a golden ring. If the Princess called for a song after retiring from table to her own apartment, this bard had to sing to her highness in a low voice, lest he should disturb the performers in the hall. The subject was said to be on *Death* (not a very lively theme), but the word is probably misinterpreted, unless it was intended, like the skeleton at Egyptian feasts, to remind the lady of her mortality.

The marriage-fine of the bard's daughter was one hundred-and-twenty pence, her nuptial present thirty shillings, and her portion three pounds. The chief of the musicians was entitled to the marriage-fine for the daughters of all the inferior musicians or bards of the district, who paid twenty-four pence on their marriage; a proof of the antiquity and authority of this office.

The poets and minstrels contended for prizes of skill: at these Eisteddfods, or British Olympics, judges were appointed to decide on their respective merits. "Although it is probable these assemblies of bards were subjected to certain restrictions, there is no instance of such being the case before the days of Cadwallader, who died at Rome, A. D. 688. "Cadwallader, it is said, being at one of these assemblies, with his nobles, a minstrel came thither, who played in a key so displeasing, that he and all his brethren were prohibited, under a severe penalty, from ever playing on it any more; but were ordered to adopt that of Mwynen Gwynedd, or the sweet key of Gwynedd."<sup>1</sup>

There was another custom worth notice, which concerned the bards. The nuptial feast being concluded, a Pencerdd, or chief musician, was constituted Cyff Cler, and seated in a chair surrounded by the other bards standing, who made him the subject of their merry and ludicrous compositions, to raise mirth in the company. He was that day to make no reply, but on the next he was to divert the hall at the expense of the

<sup>1</sup> Pennant.

inferior bards, and was also to compose a poem upon a subject given him suitable to his dignity.<sup>1</sup>

There were not many dishes used by the ancient Britons at their feast, nor various kinds of cookery. "They served up fish, the flesh of tame animals, wild-fowl and venison, either boiled, broiled or roasted. Tame fowl they never brought to table; ducks, hens, and geese were indeed reared for amusement, but their feelings were spared the sacrifice of beholding the favourite bird of yesterday a victim on the board of to-day. In their kitchens they used spits and earthen pots; platters formed of wood, earth and even pewter, covered their tables. The knives and forks of the inmates or guests hung at their girdles, in the same case with the dagger, called by the ancient Scotsman, *Bidoc*. Side tables were also provided, on which might be seen drinking-cups of wood, horn and earth, one of silver usually being there also, and sometimes of shell. There was a distinction in the mode of placing themselves at the feast. The superiors or chiefs of the party occupied a table in the centre of the great hall, while their retainers sat upon benches raised but a little from the ground, and arranged in a circle around them; they were attended on by youth of both sexes. After eating, the chieftain called for a cup of wine or ale, and drank to the person who sat on his right hand, and the same cup being afterwards filled to the brim, was passed round the circle to each person in succession. Women not only had a place at the festive board, but were treated with much honour, and were accustomed to retire, as in more modern times, before the other sex indicated any symptoms of the effect of their potations."<sup>2</sup>

From many passages in Le Grand's *Fabliaux*, it appears that the custom of reclining on beds or couches during meals still subsisted, and to eat on the same trencher or plate with any one was considered a great mark of friendship. At great entertainments, the guests were placed two and two, and only one plate was allotted to each pair. In the romance of *Perceforest*, it is said, "there were eight hundred knights all seated at table, and yet there was not one who had not a dame or damsel at his plate." In the romance of *Lancelot du Lac*, a lady whom her jealous husband had compelled to dine *in the kitchen*, complains, "it is very long since any knight has eaten on the same plate with me."<sup>3</sup>

A peace of twelve years' duration followed the second nuptials of King Arthur. In this interval he acquired much renown by his splendour and magnificence, and foreign princes sought his friendship.<sup>4</sup> Norway and Denmark owned his supremacy, and Arthur sought to reduce Gaul, then a province of Rome. He laid siege to Paris, and reduced the city to such extremities that Floлло, the governor, offered to meet the King in single contest to decide the struggle, according to the chivalry of the day. In this encounter Floлло was slain, and Paris became the property of the British hero. Such is the account given by our ancient historians. Arthur, on this, established his court in France, and assumed for the royal coat of arms, quarterly, France and England. These arms,—afterwards

<sup>1</sup> Pennant's *Wales*.

<sup>2</sup> Macpherson.

<sup>3</sup> Notes to Le Grand's *Fabliaux*.

<sup>4</sup> Kippis, *Biog. Brit.*



to be seen in Glastonbury Abbey, on the head of which it was bestowed by the King, in divers panels of the wainscot of the abbot's apartment, and over the chimneys,—were “vert, a cross bottone, argent, in the first quarter our Blessed Lady, with our Saviour in her right arm, and a sceptre in her left, all or.”<sup>1</sup>

That Arthur was a believer in the Christian faith, is evident from the fact of his making a cession of certain of his territories to the Saxon Prince Cerdic, on condition of his becoming a Christian.<sup>2</sup> Leland, who describes the seal of Arthur, which he had himself seen in the Church of Westminster,<sup>3</sup> declares that upon it the monarch appeared holding in his right hand a sceptre with a fleur-de-lis on the top, and in his left hand “orbem cruce insignitum,”<sup>4</sup> plainly inferring a sovereignty over both France and England.

The successes of Arthur have been described as so wondrous as to belong rather to fiction than history, and it has been doubted whether Arthur ever held any dominions in Gaul. However this may be, tradition that he had such a sway still lingers in Brittany, as a modern writer tells us, in describing a visit she paid to Caerduel, situate in the parish of Pleumeur Bodorr, “the lovers of romance will hardly think that labour lost which places them on a spot so celebrated in the chronicles of the period as the favourite residence of King Arthur. Here places and names surround us, with which the Romances of the Round Table have made us familiar, but to which fancy has assigned a locality in fairy-land, rather than in any veritable portion of the earth's surface. Here the half-fictitious personages whose adventures have in so many forms amused us, and the mystic performers of those deeds which have bequeathed to Europe an heroic literature of her own, have ‘a local habitation and a name.’”<sup>5</sup> “Here it was,” says M. de Fremenville, “that Arthur, surrounded by his noble peers, Lancelot, and Tristan, and Caradoc, and Yvain, and the rest, held a brilliant court, of which his wife, Guenarchan and the beautiful Brangwain were the ornament and pride.”

“It is certain, at least as certain as anything can be relating to a period so remote, and at best but semi-historic, that Arthur possessed dominions in Brittany as well as in Wales, during the early part of the sixth century. In the romances which celebrate his adventures, we find him as often in one country as the other.”<sup>6</sup>

The reminiscences attached to Caerduel, are not the only ones in this neighbourhood which relate to King Arthur, if the antiquaries of this country may be believed. “There is, at no great distance from this spot, and just off the coast, a little isle called Agalon, or Avalon, and here, as the Bretons most jealously maintain, and not at Glastonbury, according to the more generally received tradition, was the tomb of the monarch. The well known fable of his existence in fairy-land, and his

<sup>1</sup> Hearne's *Antiquities of Glastonbury*.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Borlase.

<sup>3</sup> Selden believed it a fact that Leland did see the seal here alluded to.

<sup>4</sup> Selden's *Titles of Honour*.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Trollope, in “*A Summer in Brittany*.”

<sup>6</sup> M. de Fremenville.

return at some future period to rule again over his faithful Celts on either side the Channel, a tradition firmly believed by the peasants in some parts of Brittany to the present day, has been explained under the hypothesis of his having died in the Breton Avalon in this manner. The fairy Morgain, whose name ought to be written Morgwen, and means 'whiteness of the sea,' was a Druid priestess living in that island. It is known that these mysterious priestesses usually dwelt on the most wild and savage promontories of this rugged coast, or in the still more inaccessible islands which surround it. On that shore of the isle of Avalon which is opposite to the main land, there are extensive quicksands; and the supporters of this explanation think, that Arthur's loss among these, upon some occasion when his love of the chase, or some other adventure, had taken him to this mysterious and sacred isle, was poetised into the story of the fairy Morgwen having detained him prisoner in her enchanted isle."<sup>1</sup>

Arthur had early distributed his possessions on the continent among his followers, and Normandy is said to have been allotted to Bedoer, his butler. During the nine years that France is said to have been the monarch's residence, he arranged everything for the preservation of tranquillity in his territories there. At length he returned to Britain, and considering some solemn demonstration of power necessary after so long an absence, he resolved to be again crowned, with every possible grandeur which such a great occasion could demonstrate. The feast of Pentecost was approaching, when King Arthur called together an assembly of his British subjects at Caerleon, in Monmouthshire, for this august ceremony to be performed.

The ancient city of Caerleon or Caergwent, is described by Giraldus Cambrensis, in his Itinerary through Wales in the year 1188, when he attended Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his journey there; the object of the prelate not being, as is generally supposed, the conversion of the Welsh to Christianity, which had been early established in their country, but that of preaching a crusade for the recovery of the Holy Land, which, by the dissensions of the Christian princes, had lately been lost. There can be no doubt that the description of Giraldus affords an accurate representation of the state of that place in the twelfth century.

"It is called Caerleon, the City of the Legions; for 'Caer,' in the British language, signifies 'city,' or 'castle,' and because the Roman legions which were sent into this island, were accustomed to winter in this place, it acquired the name of Caerleon. This city is of great antiquity and fame, and was strongly defended by the Romans with brick walls. Many remains of its ancient magnificence are still extant, such as splendid palaces, which once emulated, with their gilded roofs, the grandeur of Rome; for it was originally built by the Emperors, and adorned with stately edifices, immense baths, temples, and a theatre, the walls of

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Trollope. "From Kaerduel," continues the same author, "we walked to Penos Guirec, and there breakfasted, and then proceeded to Trecastel. It is a very remarkable line of coast, presenting, without any of the grandeur and sublimity of high cliffs, a scene of savage wildness and rugged barrenness which I have rarely seen equalled."

which are still standing. Here we still see, both within and without the walls, subterraneous buildings, aqueducts, and vaulted caverns, and what appeared to me most remarkable, stoves so excellently contrived as to diffuse their heat through secret and unperceivable pores. The city is pleasantly situated on the banks of the navigable Usk, and surrounded with woods and pasture."

Among the ruins of Caerleon, various antiquities have been from time to time discovered, of many of which a catalogue was preserved by Camden and his continuator.

The views in the neighbourhood of Caergwent are extensive and fine, but the mighty Roman city has sunk down to a miserable village, the ruined walls of which, on the south and west side, alone remain to attest its former greatness. A modern traveller writes thus respecting this spot of ancient celebrity: "The Roman walls are still visible, but the facing stones have long since been removed for private uses. Near the centre of the field, adjoining to the west wall, is the theatre (or more properly the amphitheatre), mentioned by Giraldus. The form of it only remains, no traces of its walls being discoverable; the diameter of the area is very large, and is bounded with a high circular entrenchment of earth. There is very little extant of the castle, which is of a later age; and the keep is remarkably lofty. Modern Caerleon contrasts in a melancholy manner with the grandeur of its ancient state, for it contains scarcely a single decent house!"

Not to modern Caerleon, but to that ancient Roman city which shone resplendent in art and grandeur, must the reader transport himself, to witness the second coronation of Arthur the Great, the supposed conqueror of Gaul, the hero of the ancient Britons, to whom nothing seemed impossible. The city was conveniently situated for the concourse whom the King had invited thither on this solemn occasion. Among the royal guests are named the Kings of Scotland, North and South Wales and of Cornwall, the Archbishops of London, York, and Caerleon, with many British princes, besides the Kings of Ireland, Iceland, Gothland, the Orkneys, and Norway.

So great was the splendour of this solemn festival that all the fronts of the houses are said to have been laid over with gold in honour of the occasion, after the custom of the Romans of that time. The British historian, who has handed down to us the particulars of the eventful ceremony, remarks, moreover, that "there never were assembled at any festival so many men and women of rank; so many steeds, hawks, and hounds; nor was there such a display of precious stones, golden vessels, and dresses of purple and fine linen, as there; for there was no one, even beyond Spain, desirous of distinction, who did not come to partake of the general satisfaction. There were also many who, uninvited, came to be spectators."<sup>1</sup> Arthur and Queen Guenever were invested with their crowns in the following manner:—

"When the company was assembled, the three Archbishops were called upon to robe the King, and place the crown upon his head; and

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<sup>1</sup> Holinshed, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Dubricius (Archbishop of Caerleon) was appointed *to sing the sacred service*. Arthur, when he entered the church, was arrayed in his royal robes, and supported by the other two Archbishops; and before him went four persons, bearing each a drawn sword, this being his privilege as general. The four persons were—Arawn ap Cynfarch, King of Albany; Caswallon law hir, King of Gwynedd; Meyric, King of Dyfed; and Cador, Earl of Cornwall. As he went on, the conventual train, on all sides, sang the best poetical compositions to the sound of musical instruments.”<sup>1</sup>

“The Queen also, on her part, entered the church after him,” though, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account, she went to the other church, which agrees better with what is said of the populace running from one church to the other. “This, and some other minute circumstances, give to the author of this description the air of one who had been a spectator.”<sup>2</sup>

Whether the ceremony was performed in one church, or at the two different edifices, it is needful here to pursue the narrative of Tysilio. Guenever, according to his description, “entered the church after her husband, dressed in her royal robes, her crown on her head, attended by bishops and nuns, and the four wives of the four above-mentioned chiefs, each bearing a white pigeon in her hand.”<sup>3</sup> When she had entered the church, the service began, which had been composed and set to music in the best manner ever known; and the people ran from church to church to listen to the different services.

“When the service was over, the King and Queen returned to the palace, changed their dresses, and entered the great hall to the banquet; Arthur and his attendants taking their places at one end of the hall, and at the other Gwenwhyfar, and the ladies in her train, as it was the custom for the Queen to do, when the King held a court, and had guests by invitation.

“When all the company were properly seated, Cei arose, and taking with him a thousand men, superintended the distribution and arrangement of the viands, as Bedwyr, comptroller of the cellar, with a thousand of his men, did those of the mead, which was served in vessels of gold and silver. All these had dresses of yellow ermine. Neither was the number or dress of those who waited on the Queen inferior to theirs who waited on Arthur.

“Hence it was that no court in Christendom could vie with that of Britain in customs or regulations. For all the men who attended on Arthur were in uniform, as were also their wives; and the ceremonial rules of behaviour were alike to all. And as no female, of any description, would admit the addresses of a man undistinguished by military excellence, the men were the more valorous, and the women more chaste.

“After the banquet, the company went out of the town to see a variety of games, and more especially the exercises with the lance; and what-

<sup>1</sup> Chron. Tysilio.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. J. P. Roberts.

<sup>3</sup> This seems either to have been a part of the ancient ceremonial, or to have been an allusion to the feast of Pentecost.



ever were the game devised, the walls were crowded with female spectators, each of whom recommended her favourite to notice, which caused the men to exert their abilities to the utmost. Prizes for the victors were also given by the Sovereign, at his own expense.<sup>1</sup>

"Thus the festival continued for three whole days, and on the fourth, those who attended it were gratified by ample presents,—some by a grant of cities or castles, and others by vacant bishopricks. And on this occasion Dubricius, Archbishop of Caerleon, retiring to live as a hermit, surrendered his see; for, considering how long a preparation had been made for a festival of three days only, and struck with the perishable nature of worldly enjoyments, he resolved to prepare for the eternal joys of heaven."<sup>2</sup>

The translator of the foregoing Chronicle of Tysilio remarks, that this sentiment attributed to Dubricius, whatever he might think of the mode he pursued, is finely impressive; for surely, if transient pleasures require so much preparation, those which are eternal demand one more serious.

Although in the midst of coronation festivities, here must we break off the records concerning Guenever, the second of Arthur's Queens, of whom nothing more has been handed down, than an account of the exhumation of her remains, which, at her death, were interred at Glastonbury. This lady was so much beloved by Arthur, that at his own death he requested to be interred by her side, a desire fulfilled with fidelity by his British subjects.

<sup>1</sup> 'Some guests the while, as various likings sway,  
With tables\* or with chess beguile the day.'

The Knight and the Sword.—*Breton Lays*.

<sup>2</sup> Chronicle of Tysilio, translated by Rev. P. R. Roberts.

\* Tables was a game resembling trictrac or backgammon. Both chess and tables were mentioned by Robert of Gloucester, in describing King Arthur's coronation—"Wyth pleyinge at tables, other atte chekere."—*Warton's History of English Poetry*.

Chess, a favourite Asiatic game, was either introduced into Europe by the Saracens of Spain, or learned from the Greeks or Turks by the pilgrims in the Crusades.—*Notes to the Fables by M. le Grand*.

## GUENEVER III.

Guenever, daughter of Gogauranus—The sisters of Arthur—Curious story of Fedelmia and her friend—The children exchanged—The invasion—The “hag’s” visit—Explanation and secrecy—Change in the manners of Arthur and his Court owing to the Pictish Princess—The enchanted mantle—Queen Guenever’s disgrace—Sir Cradocke’s triumph—The Three Battle-Knights of Britain—The Three Gift-Horses—The three Chaste Women—The fatal horn—King Mark’s Queen—Tristan and Iseult—Queen Guenever and Lancelot—King Arthur’s Castle at Camelot—His Courts—The King’s nephews—Schools for British youth—Arthur quits his Court—Mordred’s conduct—Battle of Camel-ford—Morgwenna and her maidens—Arthur’s death—Constantine’s cruelty—Guenever retires to Caerleon—Interred there—Discovery of Arthur’s tomb.

THE third and last Queen of Arthur, like the two former, was known by the name of Guenever; her father was a King of the Picts, of gigantic stature, called Gogauranus,<sup>1</sup> who had also two sons, Durstus and Garnardus, Kings of Pictland.<sup>2</sup> From this it would seem that the new bride of Arthur was daughter of the King to whom his sister Ada had been married. Anne<sup>3</sup> and Ada, both very beautiful princesses, the children of Uther Pendragon by Igwerna, were both married on the same day; Anne, the eldest,<sup>4</sup> to Lothaire, King of the Picts, and Ada, the youngest, to Gabranus, or Goranus, who ruled over the Scots.<sup>5</sup> This double nuptial ceremony was performed at London,<sup>6</sup> and the princesses were given away by their uncle Aurelius Ambrosius. Goranus had been previously married to a lady named Ingeanach, of whom the following curious story is recorded, and which, as it seems much more likely that she was mother of Guenever III., than the Princess Ada, who was Arthur’s own sister, is here given.

Eochaidh, or Eugenius, son of Eana Cinsalach, King of Leinster, had been banished from Ireland, by Niell, the monarch, and, with his consort, Fedelmia, sought an asylum in Scotland, with her friend Ingeanach, wife of Goranus, son of Domangard. Both ladies were on the point of becoming mothers, and being brought to bed on the same night, partly for convenience, and partly from regard to each other, had been lodged in the same apartment, no other person being admitted to their chamber but the female attendant whose presence was necessary on the occasion. Fedelmia brought forth two sons; Ingeanach only a daughter, and all her children being girls, she had passionately desired a son. This having

<sup>1</sup> Langhorne.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Called by Langhorne, Arthur’s “twin-sister,” “gemella soror.”

<sup>4</sup> Scott.

<sup>5</sup> Carew, Kippis, Rowlands.

<sup>6</sup> Holinshed.

also, been the wish of her husband, whom she desired to please, Ingeanach besought her friend to substitute one of her sons for the daughter to whom she had given birth. The exchange was readily made, and the infant prince received with embraces of affection by Ingeanach. As soon as the Queen's attendants were admitted, and learnt that a prince had just been born, they carried the happy tidings to Goranus, who, unsuspecting of any fraud, received the infant with the greatest endearments, named it Eugenius in honour of his friend, and treated it as his own.

On the death of Niell, Eugenius or Eochaidh, returned into Ireland, and took possession of Leinster, his own patrimony, over which he ruled for many years. His wife and son, whom he sent for from Scotland, joined him there: the latter, who succeeded him on the throne, had received the name of Brandubh.

Meanwhile, Goranus had settled the succession upon his supposed son. At his death, Eugenius was, therefore, crowned King of the Scots, without opposition. No sooner had he settled his affairs than he prepared for an invasion of Ireland, grounding his pretensions to that kingdom on his royal descent. He landed with his forces in Leinster, and commenced plundering the inhabitants. Brandubh, then king, perceiving how incompetent his forces were to contend with those of his enemy, gave himself up as lost; and his despair was augmented by the Scottish King's sending to demand of him a heavy tribute, under the penalty of spreading fire and sword through his dominions. At this critical juncture, his mother, Queen Fedelmia, who lived with him, volunteered to go in person to Eugenius, having a scheme of her own, by which she hoped to persuade him to retire out of the province. On her arrival at the Scottish camp, the Queen demanded an audience of the royal leader. So extraordinary a request led the King to imagine that the lady was distracted; but he nevertheless acceded to her petition. She then boldly expostulated with him upon the subject of his invasion, represented the cruel havoc he was making in Leinster, and bravely inquired what had provoked him to so barbarous and unwarrantable an undertaking. Eugenius, indignant at being thus called to account, replied roughly, that "it was not necessary for him to answer every *old hag* who should ask him questions;" and then ordered her to quit the camp. Whereupon Fedelmia told him "that his own mother was as much a hag as herself, as she would soon convince him, if he would grant her a private audience, for she had a secret to disclose that was of the utmost importance to his interest." The King, who was all curiosity to hear what she had to say, having granted her request, Fedelmia thus addressed him: "Sir, I told you that your own mother was such a hag as myself, which is literally true; for I am your mother, and Brandubh, the King of Leinster, whom you seem resolved to drive out of Leinster, is your own brother; and to evince my honour and veracity upon this occasion, I beseech you to send instantly to your supposed mother, the Queen Dowager of Scotland, who, I am confident, will assert the truth, and confess that you are my son; only let me entreat you to cease hostilities and outrages upon the province until the messenger returns." The astonishment of the King was great at what had been revealed by Fedelmia, and so important did he consider the relation she

had given him, that he instantly dispatched a messenger into Scotland to his mother, desiring she would come to him into Ireland with all possible haste, as her presence was absolutely necessary relative to the most tender circumstance which had occurred to him during his whole life. Queen Ingeanach complied with the request of her son, and on her landing in Ireland was conducted to the camp. The King of Scotland then acquainted her with the occasion of his message, and the surprising account he had heard from the Queen of Leinster, and desired she would satisfy him as to the truth of the discovery, and declare on her honour whether he was her son or not. The lady openly confessed the whole intrigue between herself and the Queen of Leinster, and convinced the King as to the fact of his birth, who desired that they would keep the matter secret, lest his right to the crown should be disputed, and an attempt be made to prevent the succession of his family to the throne of Scotland; for if the tribe of the Dalriada were informed he was not the son of the deceased monarch, they would dispute his title, and disturb his government. The ladies bound themselves to secrecy; a peace was immediately made, and a strict friendship established with Brandubh, the King of Leinster; and Eugenius, withdrawing his forces from the island, returned into Scotland.

Very unlike was this Queen to her predecessors in character—for we read of Guenever II., that no court in Christendom was more remarkable for female purity than hers, where the men were brave, and the women free from reproach—and no sooner had Arthur become allied to this Pictish princess, than a change took place in the manners of the court; nor does the fame of Guenever III. herself escape. Not only was Guenever unfaithful to her royal lord, but the brave Arthur, the hero of his times, who had been so tenderly attached to his two former Queens, followed the bad example of his present wife.

A story is related of an enchanted mantle, the property of which was, that none but a modest and pure woman could wear it. It was justly reckoned one of the greatest curiosities of Britain, and as such is frequently alluded to by the old Welsh bards.<sup>1</sup>

This extraordinary garment was brought to Carlisle, where the court was then staying: it was the third morning of May. “God speed thee, King Arthur,” said the dwarf who exhibited this robe, the pattern and nature of which were rare to behold; “and God be with thy fair Queen Guenever. I have brought a curious article of female costume, well-shaped, and fair to look on, which I wish her majesty to try on; but it has one small fault,—it will neither keep shape nor colour a moment on any lady that hath done amiss.” On this, all the knights in the court began to be in fear for their ladies; but not so Queen Guenever, who forthwith advancing, boldly seized the mantle, and threw it at once over her person, to make the first trial, when, lo! says the ballad—

“From top to toe it shiver’d down,  
As though with sheers bestradde.

“One while it was too long,  
Another while too short,  
And wrinkled on her shoulders  
In most unseemly sort.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Ellis.



“Now green, now red, it seemed,  
 Then all of sable hue;  
 ‘Beshrew me,’ quoth King Arthur,  
 ‘I think thou be’st not true!’”

On which remark, the Queen indignantly casts down the mantle, with severe reproaches to her lord, saying, as she departs to her chamber—

“‘I had rather live in desarts,  
 Beneath the greenwood tree,  
 Than here, base king, among thy groomes,  
 The sport of them and thee!’”

Sir Kaye next called on his lady to essay the wonderful garment: “Here, put on this mantle, if thou art innocent; but if thou art guilty, bide where thou art, come not near it.” How did the knights laugh, and the ladies titter with mirth, when they beheld the mantle shrivel and shrink together! the lady cast it from her, and followed Guenever to her chamber. Another trial was made; but at the first touch, this sensitive garment shrunk up “to a tassel and a thread.” At last, Sir Cradocke’s lady made the attempt, and with complete success; for the magic robe fell into as elegant and decorous folds as any matron could desire. Queen Guenever, who, from her chamber beheld this, burst forth into passionate exclamations of envy, and, coming down into the company, declared the mantle had been falsely won; she was thereupon reproved by the owner, who told the King freely, that she stood in need of chastisement, for her bold speech and too free carriage.

Warton was of opinion, that the ballad of “The Boy and the Mantle” was taken from an old French piece, entitled, “Le Court Mantel,” quoted by M. de St. Palaye, in his “Mémoires sur l’ancienne Chevalerie:” the tale also resembles that of Ariosto’s Enchanted Cup. The old stories possessed by other countries of King Arthur, were imported originally from Britain, according to Sir Henry Ellis. The currency of the story is a proof, at least, that there was no want of satire at Arthur’s court, and probably no lack of matter for its exercise.

While the owner of the mantle was reproving Guenever, a wild boar ran by, which he seized, and having killed, laid the head down before the court, saying, “No man, whose wife has done him wrong, can carve that!” Several hid their knives, unwilling to risk the attempt; some others affected they had none; but all who did try failed, Sir Cradocke alone excepted. A golden horn was then produced by this ill-omened stranger, who filled it with wine. “Let any knight, whose wife hath erred, try to drink out of that.” “It was spilt on the shoulder of one, on the knee of another, and in the eyes of a third; nor could any drink a drop but Sir Cradocke, who won the horn and boar’s head, while his dame carried off the magical garment, accompanied by the envy and acclamations of the whole court.

Cradocke, or Caradoc, was surnamed strong-armed. His warlike achievements obtained for him the dignities of a Knight of the Round Table, and he was made lord of the “dolorous tower,” destined for the confinement of state-prisoners. The Triads style him one of the *three* battle-knights of Britain; and Arthur himself called him the Pillar of

Wales. His praises were celebrated by Aneurin Gwawdrydd, "the Monarch of the Bards," who flourished about 570, in his poem entitled, *Gododin*: and the Triads style his fleet war-horse Lluagor, "one of the three gift-horses of Britain." Caradoc, however, possessed a still greater treasure, as we have seen, in his wife, a princess whom the triads notice as "one of the three chaste women of Britain;" who possessed three rarities, of which herself only was reputed worthy—her mantle, her golden goblet and her knife."<sup>1</sup>

A horn, adorned with gold, is mentioned in the poem called "*La Mort d'Arthur*," possessing such virtue, that no lady untrue to her husband could drink out of it without spilling the wine: this enchanted horn had been sent to acquaint Arthur with Guenever's frailty, but was intercepted by King Mark, whose queen, with one hundred of her ladies, tried to drink out of it, and "only four could drink without spilling!" There is another characteristic story told of the Queen of Mark: these popular tales are almost all we have to guide us as to the habits of the day, and have therefore their value.

Many, indeed, is the fiction interwoven with the history of Arthur's time; and difficult is it to separate the true from the false. Caradoc and Tristram, and indeed, most of the knights whose achievements have been handed down in ballads to posterity, have left their names attached to numerous spots of legendary interest.

The famous legend of the Queen of Mark runs as follows:—

Morrough, one of Arthur's newly created knights, brother of the Queen of Leinster, was sent by Anguish or Angus, King of Ireland, into Cornwall, to demand of Mark, its king, a tribute won from him in single combat. Payment was refused, but Mark offered to meet the ambassador in single combat, to decide their strength of arms. Sir Tristram, or Tristan in the French romances, undertook the share of Mark in the engagement, in which he dealt so fierce a blow on his opponent's skull that, returning to Ireland, he died of the wound. Tristram himself was wounded by a spear, which had been poisoned, and he departed also for Ireland, to seek a cure in the country where the poison had been prepared. While at court there, his skilful performance on the harp made a great impression on all the household of King Anguish, and won for him the heart of the beautiful Isod, or Isolde, the monarch's daughter. Her love was returned; but as true love always finds a cross, the Queen, by private intelligence and other means, learnt that Sir Tristram was the person to whom her brother owed his death-wound; upon which discovery he was banished, not only from the court, but also from the kingdom. On his return, Mark was so interested by the recital of the charms of the Irish princess, that he despatched Sir Tristram to Ireland again, as his own ambassador, to seek the hand of Isolde for himself. "*La Belle Iseult*," as French romances call her, returned with her former lover to Cornwall, where her marriage with Mark was celebrated with much joy and solemnity. But the renewed acquaintance of the lovers had revived the flame which should now have been extinguished. Again Sir Tristram sought to en-

<sup>1</sup> Le Grand's *Fabliaux*, notes.

tain his fair mistress with the sweet strains of his harp; and on one of these occasions he became a victim to the aroused jealousy of Mark, by whose hand he was slain; so that the historian remarks "his love, which began with the harp, ended with the harp."<sup>1</sup> The father of Isod, who doated on her, had built for her, before she left Ireland, a castle upon the walls of Dublin, called Isod's or Isolde's Tower. It stood near "a void room called Preston's Inns, which, in those times, served as a place of recreation for the monarchs of the country;<sup>2</sup> and, not far from Dublin and from Isod's Tower, is a chapel with a village, named Chapel Isoud, which was afterwards built by King Anguish, 'in remembrance of his child, and for the good of her soul.'"<sup>3</sup>

The chronicles of the times abound with instances of Guenever's gaieties; and in the merry court of Arthur, filled with knights and chivalry, many strove to obtain the notice of the fair Pictish Queen, who presided over their assemblies. In the curious metrical romance, entitled "*La Mort d'Arthur*," the greatest part of the poem consists of the exploits of Sir Launcelot du Lake, King of Benwike, his amours with Guenever, and his refusal, for her sake, of the beautiful daughter of the Earl of Ascalot. At the conclusion of the tale, both Launcelot and Guenever assume the religious habit, in token of their repentance.<sup>4</sup>

It was usual for knights to wear the sleeve of their lady love or mistress upon their arms. Elayne, the fayre maiden of Aslotot, gave Sir Launcelot "a reed sleeve of scarlet, wel embroudred with grete perlys."<sup>5</sup> This love-token the gallant knight of the Round Table ventured to display at a tournay, which circumstance very seriously displeased his royal mistress, Queen Guenever, who, like other enamoured dames, could brook no rival. Nevertheless, Sir Launcelot's fidelity to the Queen, though often tried in that fickle court, was so firm that legends tell of his having been visited by a fair love-sick damsel, who assuring him the Queen could not possibly be informed of his trespass, he chivalrously answered, "Though she should never know it, my heart, which is constantly near her, could not be ignorant." One of the four knaves or varlets of the French playing-cards bears the name of Lancelot, in memory of that valiant hero.

The circle which surrounded the King and Queen of this chivalrous time appears to have been more merry than moral, and extremely splendid.

"King Arthur at Camelot kept his court royall,  
With his fayre quene, Dame Guenever the gay;  
And many bold barons sitting in hall,  
With ladies attired in purple and pall."

"Cadbury Castle, called by ancient topographers *Camalet*, was situated on the eastern side of the parochial church of Cadbury," at the northern extremity of a ridge of high hills, commanding an extensive prospect over Meadess and the Blackdown summits in Devonshire. "Its

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hanmer, Caxton, Book of Houth.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Hanmer.

<sup>4</sup> Wharton's History of English Poetry.

<sup>5</sup> Art of Needlework.

form," says Mr. Collinson,<sup>1</sup> "is neither entirely circular nor square, but somewhat between both, conforming to the shape of the hill. Part of it seems to have been hewn out of the solid rock, and is defended by four ditches, and within is a still higher entrenchment of a circular form, which was the citadel or *Prætorium*, but vulgarly called King Arthur's palace."

The rampart is composed of stones, now overspread with earth, and has only one entrance from the east, which is guarded by six or seven ditches. The area contains upwards of thirty acres. Within it and in the ditches, have been found at different periods, many noble relics of the Roman Empire.<sup>2</sup>

This ancient fortification, which, by its name, signified "Tower of War," is called by Drayton, "King Arthur's Ancient Seat;" and many places there and in the neighbourhood bear the name of that British King. His Round Table, his Kitchen, his Well, have been transmitted to our times, and even a road across the fields, under the Castle, is known as King Arthur's Hunting Causeway.

The following lines of Drayton commemorate this ancient British seat:

"Like Camelot what place was ever yet renowned?  
Where, as at Caerleon, oft he kept the Table Round;  
Most famous for the sports at Pentecost so long,  
From whence all knightly deeds and brave achievements sprung."

According to the British Triads, the principal courts or palaces of Arthur were the following:—Caerleon, on the river Usk, in Wales; Celliwig, in Devon or Cornwall; and Penrhyn Rhionedd, in the north.

The feast which Arthur held at his coronation at the first of these places, is there also spoken of as one of "The three honourable feasts of the Isle of Britain."

Among the many distinguished characters who graced the court of the chivalrous Arthur, were Mordred and Gawainus, two of the King's nephews, the sons of Lothaire, by Anna, daughter of King Uther, "the Terrible." For the eldest of these princes the Queen is said to have entertained a very strong attachment. Both of them were natives of her own country, the land of the Picts; and though the admirers of Arthur have loaded the memory of Mordred, his destroyer, with every opprobrious reproach, the British Triads state that he was remarkable for his "gentleness, good nature, and agreeable conversation," and that it was "difficult to deny him any request."

The manner in which these princes became associated with Arthur's nobles, was thus:—Their father, Lothaire, on the death of Uther, laid claim to the British crown on the score of Arthur's illegitimacy, he having married Anna, daughter of the deceased King,—a proof she was not Arthur's twin-sister, as Langhorne has asserted, but born after Igwerna's marriage. Finding this argument ineffectual, Lothaire united with the Saxons and Colgrim, who ruled in Northumberland, against Arthur.

<sup>1</sup> History of Somerset.

<sup>2</sup> Leland, Camden, Stowe, Selden.

<sup>3</sup> Turner's Anglo-Saxons.



He was defeated, and afterwards entered into an alliance, by which it was stipulated that Lothaire should preserve peace with the Scots, and aid Arthur against his Saxon foes; the condition being that Arthur should enjoy the crown during his own life, but that when he died, it should descend to Mordred or his sons, if he had any.<sup>1</sup> This treaty had answered very well for Arthur at the time when it was made, after the death of his first Queen, who was childless, and when he had himself no prospect of issue. Nor had he any children by Guenever the Second, as far as history records; yet the third Guenever, the faulty Queen, became the mother of several. There were two sons, called Noe and Llechan.

According to the agreement of Arthur and Lothaire, Mordred, the eldest son of the latter, took up his abode at the court of Arthur, as his destined successor; and his brother, the young Gawaine, also accompanied him into Britain for the purposes of education: the name of Sir Gawaine figures prominently in many of the romances of this epoch.

In Arthur's time, there were many schools in England for the education of youth; every monastery, indeed, receiving pupils. Paulinus, the disciple of Germanus, resided in the Isle of Wight, where he received pupils for education; and Dubricius, the Archbishop of Caerleon, had a school "in a place abounding with woods:"<sup>2</sup> to this last, perhaps, the young Pict was transferred. St. David, his great uncle, paid a visit to the establishment of Paulinus, who, we are told, used "to sup in the refectory, but had a scriptorium, or study, in his cell, being a famous scribe."

Lothaire, who had been the first-created knight of Arthur's Round Table, was afterwards appointed to rule over Norway and Denmark; and Gawaine became ruler of Lothian, in Scotland, the patrimonial estate or inheritance, but tributary to his uncle, the King of the Britons;<sup>3</sup> while Thametes, his royal sister, becoming the mistress of Eugenius, King of Scots, had by him a son, St. Kentigern, afterwards Bishop of Glasgow, a prelate of royal blood, who became a great favourite of Brudeus, King of the Picts.

Morgwenna, or Anna,<sup>4</sup> sister of Arthur, after her husband's death, entered on the Druidical office of priestess, in one of the islands anciently so celebrated for those rites, upon the coast of France; later still, we

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Fosbrooke's British Monachism.

<sup>3</sup> Lothaire's dominions included all the lands about Pentland to the Forth, which were from him called Lothian. He was also rightful heir to the throne of Norway, being of the lineage of King Sichelm. The Norwegians had elected Riculf for their king; but Arthur, who had invaded Norway and Denmark, killed the usurper, and placed his brother-in-law upon the throne, who immediately resigned Lothian, in Scotland, to his son. — Harding, Brit. Bray.

Langhorne calls Lothus the ruler of Laudonia, and brother of Augusellus and Urianus. [Turner also says Lot was brother of Urien, and son of Cynfarch, and that Anna's marriage with him united the Kings of the Northern Britons in consanguinity with Arthur.] It was Augusellus bore the sword at Arthur's coronation: we do not hear that Lothus was present on that occasion.

<sup>4</sup> Whether Morgwenna and Anna are the same admits of a doubt.

trace her to Avalon, and find her attendant on the bed of her dying brother, King Arthur.

Arthur, finding it necessary to take up arms against the Romans, and to quit the country for that expedition, made the necessary arrangements for government during his absence. He accordingly declared publicly, that should anything happen to himself, Constantine, the son of Cadur, Earl of Cornwall, a nobleman much loved by the people, was the person he desired to succeed to his crown: by which it would seem that he did not consider Guenever's sons his heirs. During his temporary absence, Mordred was placed at the head of the government, as regent, and Arthur commended the Queen, his wife, to his protection.<sup>1</sup> This done, the King departed to battle with his enemies, little expecting what would transpire in his absence.

Mordred, who had always expected to succeed to Arthur's crown in the event of his death, was so much exasperated on learning that Constantine had been preferred to him and to his children, that he remonstrated with the King, and ventured to remind him, before his departure, of the agreement made formerly with his father.<sup>2</sup> King Lothaire was dead, and Arthur now made that an excuse for considering the agreement at an end; Mordred and his friends were accordingly silenced for a time, but no sooner was Arthur gone than Mordred began to endeavour to establish for himself the claim to what he conceived his rightful inheritance.

His designs, however, did not at first discover themselves openly. Perhaps Mordred would never have carried them to such lengths, had he not been secretly favoured by Queen Guenever, who was attached to him, and from the first had desired to promote his views, and those of her countrymen, the Picts.

When first Mordred had settled at the court of Arthur as heir apparent to his crown, he had received the hand of the daughter of Gawolan, a British lord much esteemed by Arthur, and sister, as is supposed, of the historian Gildas.<sup>3</sup>

Although Mordred had formed this alliance, and had offspring by his wife, he is said to have encouraged the Queen's passion privately, while both conspired against his uncle's crown. He was not long in assembling a party in his favour, composed of Picts, Scots, and Bretons, and of their cabals Guenever was not ignorant, having, as we are told, been "too

<sup>1</sup> Biog. Brit., Robinson.

<sup>2</sup> Buchanan.

<sup>3</sup> Opposite Uphill, in Somersetshire, is the lofty island of Steep Holmes — a vast rock, inaccessible except by two passages, the summit sandy and unfruitful, producing few shrubs or vegetables. In this solitary spot, Gildas Badonicus, the ancient British historian and philosopher, surnamed "the Wise," pursued his literary studies, disturbed alone by the noisy sea-gulls, which build their nests amid the crevices of the rocks. Here, while the country was wasted with civil strife, was composed his celebrated work, "*De excidio Britanniae*." But not even in this forlorn place of refuge did he long remain unmolested. A band of pirates, who had fled there to escape justice, settled in the island, and, by degrees, stripped the sage of the little he possessed, till, obliged to forsake the island, he betook himself to the Monastery of Glastonbury. He died about 570. — Collinson's History of Somerset.

familiar with Mordred." To fortify himself still more strongly against his uncle, Mordred entered into an alliance with the Saxons under Æthelbert, the first King of Kent, who held his court in the town of Richborough, in the Isle of Thanet.

Arthur, meanwhile, had been apprised of the deep injuries which he had sustained, and leaving his nephew Hoel, King of Armorica, to pursue his affairs abroad, returned with all haste to Britain. He succeeded in landing in Kent, where, at Richborough, a bloody battle was fought, in which, though many of Arthur's friends were slain, Mordred was defeated and forced to fly to Winchester, whither the King pursued him. He was again defeated by Arthur at that city, and forced to fly into Cornwall.

The final contest between the King and his nephew took place about a mile and a half from Camelford,<sup>1</sup> on the banks of the river Camblan, in Cornwall. Numbers fell on both sides during the engagement: the army of Mordred was totally routed, the Prince himself slain in the battle, while his brother Gawaine, who fought on the side of his patron the King, also lost his life. Arthur, mortally wounded, was conveyed from the field by his friends. His sister Morgwenna,<sup>2</sup> as recorded by all credible historians, with her attendant maidens, conveyed the dying King in a barge along the shore to the Usella, which they ascended, and committed him to the care of his friends at Glastonbury, in Avalon, Somersetshire. There, in the monastery, Arthur remained during the brief period which preceded his death, for his wounds proved mortal. Finding himself becoming hourly weaker, he resigned his crown to Constantine, the son of Cador, whom he had previously nominated his successor. Notwithstanding the tender care bestowed on the King by Morgwenna and her maidens, who were well versed in the female Druidical accomplishment of healing, Arthur died of his wounds, May 21st, A. D. 542.<sup>3</sup> Fearful that the news of his death would cast a damp over the Britons, and infuse courage into their Saxon foes, it was industriously circulated that Arthur was recovering; and Taliessin sang that Morgwenna had promised that if her brother remained a long time with her, she would cure his wounds; hence it happened that the return of Arthur was, for many ages after, one of the fondest hopes of the British people.<sup>4</sup>

As for Constantine, he was crowned by Arthur's subjects on the King resigning his crown, and this event was followed by the murder of the two young sons of his rival, Mordred, attributed by some authors to Constantine himself, though he had given them a promise of safety. This King is said to have cruelly slain the royal youths in the church with their two governors, even in the arms of their mother, to whose lap they flew for shelter, vainly beseeching her to protect them, nor could the intervention of the Abbot avail, who threw his cope over them, hoping that respect for his sacred robe would have withheld the murderers. Some attribute the deed to revenge for the death-wound of Arthur having

<sup>1</sup> During this battle, in which Mordred was killed and Arthur mortally wounded, the sun is said to have been twice eclipsed!

<sup>2</sup> Called by romancers "The Fairy Morgana."

<sup>3</sup> Warner's Glastonbury.

<sup>4</sup> Turner.



been dealt by Mordred, others to a resolution to extinguish the race of Mordred, lest they should aspire to the regal power which they might justly claim from their grandmother, the sister of King Arthur.

On the dispersion of the clergy, Cuillog, the widow of Mordred, and her brothers, retired into Anglesey, where they built cloisters for religious purposes.<sup>1</sup> As Arthur had disinherited the young princes, sons of Cuillog, it is not surprising that their uncle Gildas, the British historian, omitted the name of King Arthur in his work, or that he spoke ill in it of Constantine, who was his nephews' murderer, besides using many angry expressions in his epistle.<sup>2</sup>

It was only for a short time that Constantine preserved his power: the Saxons effected a landing in Britain, and after sustaining a defeat from them, he fled to Wales with his wife and children, where for some years he maintained his royal state. On the death of his Queen, he became weary of the world, and retired secretly into Ireland, where he spent some time in ministering to the poor. At last, becoming known, Constantine was persuaded to resign his crown to his son, and profess himself a monk in the Monastery of St. David,<sup>3</sup> being a sincere convert to the Christian faith.<sup>4</sup> He was afterwards sent into Scotland by the bishop of his diocese, to instruct the people there in the faith, and while in that country suffered martyrdom, for which, many years after, he was canonized as a saint; and many Scottish churches, according to Holinshed, were, in his time standing, built by the bishops of that country, and dedicated in the name of St. Constantine.<sup>5</sup>

To return to Queen Guenever. At the time that Mordred was first put to flight by Arthur, she was residing at the city of York,<sup>6</sup> but tidings being brought to her, that Mordred was unable to defend himself against the King, "she was sore dread, and had great doubt, and wist not what was best all for to be done; for she wist well that her lord, King Arthur, would never of her have mercy for the great shame that she had him done; and took her away privily with four men, *without more*, and came to Caerleon, and there she dwelled all her life's time, and never was seen among folke her life living." She professed herself a nun in the Church of St Julius the Martyr, at Caerleon;<sup>7</sup> and by the date discovered on her tombstone at Ambresbury, in Wiltshire, must have lived to a very advanced age. The monastery in which the Queen was buried, had been erected by Aurelius Ambrosius, Arthur's uncle, for the maintenance of three hundred monks, to pray for the souls of the British noblemen slain by Hengist. The Queen's tomb, says Rapin, was found there "within the last century." This author, thought the circumstance of Guenever surviving her husband for fifty years, threw discredit on the fact, but as she was the third of his wives, and not long united to him, she might not have been thirty years of age at the time of the King's death.

The tomb of Guenever III. was more costly than that of her husband. "On its coverture it had, in rude letters of massy gold, R. G., A. D. 600.

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed, Milton.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Howel, however, declares that, at the end of a three years' reign, Constantine was slain by Conanus, and buried at Stonchenge.

<sup>4</sup> Caxton.

<sup>5</sup> Rowland's Mona. Antiqua.

<sup>6</sup> Old Welsh MS.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



The bones within this sepulchre were all firm, fair, yellow-coloured hair about the skull, and a piece of the *liver* about the size of a walnut, very dry and hard. Therein were found several royal habiliments, as jewels, veils, scarves, and the like, retaining, even till then, their proper colour; all which were afterwards very choicely kept in the collection of the Right Honourable the Earl of Hertford, and of the aforesaid gold, divers rings were made, and worn by his lordship's principal officers."<sup>1</sup>

Arthur's first consort reposed in Scotland; his second was interred at Glastonbury: to that monastery the King was conveyed after the fatal battle of Camelford, and the desire he had more than once fondly expressed, to be laid by the side of his second wife, was faithfully complied with by his friends; the funeral obsequies being managed by his sorrowing sister Morgwenna with the greatest privacy, for the reason already mentioned, although many British nobles attended the mournful ceremony.<sup>2</sup> The body of the King was placed sixteen feet deep under the ground to prevent the Saxons offering any indignity to the royal remains, in the event of their discovering the grave, the knowledge of which was kept a profound secret.<sup>3</sup> Many other British monarchs were interred in this famous place of sepulture, amongst whom were Coel, Kentwin, Edward the Elder, and Edmond Ironside.<sup>4</sup> The illustrious dead, whose remains lay in mouldering state in this abbey, were buried under the body of the church in three large vaults, supported by two rows of strong massive pillars.

The body of Arthur was not discovered till 640 years after his death;<sup>5</sup> it took place in the reign of Henry II., A. D. 1172.<sup>6</sup> That King, at the time of the reduction of Ireland, "was passing through Wales, and at Pembroke was received with regal dignity by the Welsh, on which occasion one of their bards, playing upon the harp, sang to the King, whilst he was at dinner, of the exploits of the great Arthur, wishing him the prosperity and victory which had attended that monarch. In the ballad an allusion was made to the place of Arthur's burial, said to be between two pyramids in the holy churchyard at Glastonbury, many feet deep. On his return from Ireland, the King informed Henry de Blois, then Abbot of Glastonbury, of what he had learnt from the ballad of the bard, and desired him to dig and search for the bones of the great King."<sup>7</sup> The abbot did so, and, as some say, found these bones in the manner described by our historians,<sup>8</sup> among whom was Giraldus Cambrensis, who was an eye-witness of the fact. Some, however, say that this discovery was not made till 1189, after the accession of Richard I., when Henry de Saliaco was abbot, who was created in the first year of Richard's reign. Mr. Hearne considers this more probable than that it took place under Henry de Blois, the brother of King Stephen.<sup>9</sup>

King Henry II. informed the Abbot that he had heard from the Welsh bards that Arthur lay buried between two pyramids, very deep. The monastery contained two stone pillars, with many inscriptions illegible from the injuries of time and the antiquity of the writing. The tallest

<sup>1</sup> Gough's Sepulchral Monuments. See Jones's Stonehenge restored, and Mr. Ray's Itinerary, 1662, who was shown her gravestone.

<sup>2</sup> Warner's Glastonbury.  
Warner.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Willis's Abbeys.

<sup>6</sup> Collinson.

<sup>7</sup> Leland, Stowe.

<sup>8</sup> Hearne's Glastonbury.

of these was twenty-six feet high; the sculpture upon it could not be understood. Between these two pyramids "Arthur's body was found" buried, and marked in a hollow oak deep in the earth. There was found a cross of lead and a stone thereupon, and letters written within the cross turned towards the stone, which letters, says Higden, "I read and handled in this manner: 'Hic jacet sepultus inclytus rex Arturus cum Genevera uxore sua secunda in insula Avalonia,' i. e., 'Here lieth buried the noble King Arthur, with his second wife Guenever, in Avalon.' The bones were laid in the grave, so that the two parts of the grave toward the head contained the man's bones, and the third part, towards the feet, contained the woman's bones. There the yellow tresses of the woman's hair were found whole and sound, with fresh colour;<sup>1</sup> but a monk touched the hair covetously with his hands, and anon it fell all into powder." The bones of Arthur himself are described as being of extraordinary size, and were identified by the ten wounds in his skull. The bodies of the King and Queen had been laid fifteen feet deep in the ground, as the "singer of gestis" had reported to the King, in the hope that they would not be discovered by the Saxons, and were marked, as before related, for their identity; and the discovery of them in this singular manner quite staggered the opinion held till then by the Welsh, that Arthur was still alive, and would return again to reign over his faithful people, and make them an independent nation.<sup>2</sup>

"After the spectators had gratified their curiosities, the abbot and his monks, with great satisfaction and reverence, took all the remains of the two bodies out of their separate coffins, and putting them into decent chests, made for the purpose, they deposited them first in a chapel, in the south alley of the church, till such time as a monument, suitable to the dignity of a king and queen, could be made for them, in the middle of the presbytery of the choir; where, in finishing the church, they erected a stately mausoleum of touchstone, nobly engraven on the outside, in which they placed the King's body by itself, at the head of the tomb, and the Queen's at his feet, being the east side of it." This inscription was then placed:—

"Hic jacet Arturus, flos Regum gloria regni,  
Quem mores probitas commendant laude perenni."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sharon Turner.

<sup>2</sup> The poet thus records the popular belief:—

"But for he skaped y<sup>t</sup> battel y<sup>e</sup> wys,  
Bretons and Cornych seyeth thus  
That he levyth zut perde,  
And schall come and be a king aye.  
At Glastyngbury on the queer,  
They made Arter's tombe ther,  
And wrote with Latin vers thus:  
*Hic jacet Arturus, rex quondam, rexque futurus.*"

[Chron. of Kings of England; Fabian.]

<sup>3</sup> Five different epitaphs are attributed to Arthur's tomb, and some Saxon poetry was written to his memory. — Collinson.

And over Queen Guenever's bones was the following inscription :—

“Arturi jacet hic conjux tumulata secunda,  
Quæ meruit cælos virtutum prole fecunda.”

The remains of the royal Arthur and his Queen were after this allowed to rest in peace until the year 1248, when, we are informed that King Edward I. and his wife Queen Eleanor, partly out of devotion, and partly out of curiosity, came to Glastonbury, “attended by many of the topping men of the nation, clergy as well as nobility;”<sup>1</sup> where, upon the 19th of April, they caused King Arthur's tomb to be opened, and both the shrines to be taken out of the monument, which when the Court and its attendants had thoroughly viewed, King Edward opened the shrine wherein King Arthur's bones lay, and Queen Eleanor the chest wherein were those of Queen Guenever; and then each of them taking the respective bones out of their respective chests, they exposed them on two credences, on side-tables, near the high altar, till the next morning, for every one that had a mind to gratify their curiosity; and early the next morning, being the Wednesday before Easter, the King and Queen, with great honour and respect, wrapt up all the bones (excepting the two skulls, which were set up, and to remain in the treasury) in rich shrouds or mantles, and placing them again in their separate shrines, the King put into that of Arthur, an inscription setting forth what they were. And then the King and Queen fixing their royal signets to each chest, they caused the chests to be placed in the old mausoleum,<sup>2</sup> where they remained undisturbed about two hundred and fifty years, that is to say, till the dissolution of the abbey, in the days of King Henry VIII.; and “then this noble monument,” saith Speed, “among the fatal overthrows of infinite more, was altogether rased at the dispose of some then in commission, whose over-hasty actions and too-forward zeal in their behalf hath left unto us the want of many truths, and caused to wist that some of their employments had been better spent.”<sup>3</sup>

“At the same period of the dissolution of monasteries, was destroyed a little table, containing the story of the discovery of Arthur's tomb, and the leaden cross, with the inscription which had been set up in the monastery, and were seen by the great antiquary, Leland;”<sup>4</sup> the cross, in particular, which had been placed there for exhibition, by command of the Abbot of Glastonbury, was regarded as one of the greatest curiosities of the abbey.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The king paid this visit in the sixth year of his reign, accompanied by Queen Eleanor, for the purpose of celebrating the feast of Easter, at his own expense, and was received with very great ceremony. The particulars of the royal visit, with the account of the second exhumation of the bodies of Arthur and Guenever (which took place on the Wednesday morning), are extracted from Mr. Eyston's “Little Monument,” contained in the Appendix to Warner's History of Glastonbury.

<sup>2</sup> The abbot, Henry de Saliaco, is reported to be the author of the lines placed on his tomb.—*Heayne*.

Fabian places the translation of Arthur's remains into the new tomb in the year 1180; *Biog. Brit.* in 1189.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix to Warner's Glastonbury, from Eyston's Little Monument, &c.

<sup>4</sup> *Biog. Brit.*

<sup>5</sup> Warner.

## BERTHA.

The daughter of Caribert—The two maids of honour—Dangerous confidences—The entertainment given by Ingoberga to her husband—The wool-spinner—The King's anger—The Queen's divorce—Her rival's advancement—The Queen retires to a convent—Bertha's education—Proposals of marriage from King Ethelbert of England declined on account of religion—Mirofleda supplanted by her sister—Excommunication and death of Caribert—Consent of Bertha, and arrival of the newly-married pair in England—Reside at Canterbury—Bertha's zeal in the Christian faith—Pope Gregory and Augustine—Fear of the Roman missionaries—Ethelbert receives them well, and becomes a convert—Churches—The Pope's letters—Conversion of Redwald—Story of Edwin—Bertha's death—Epitaph—Eadbald's remorse—He marries Emma.

BERTHA is a Princess whose name cannot but excite peculiar interest, for her claims on the respect of posterity are no other than having first introduced Christianity amongst the princes of the Saxon Heptarchy.

She was the daughter of Caribert, King of Paris, by Ingoberga, his first Queen; and though some have supposed her their only child, she had two sisters, both of whom assumed the religious habit, one at Tours, the other at Poitiers. Notwithstanding Caribert was four times married, these three daughters were his only offspring; so that the kingdom, at his death, devolved on his brother; the French laws not permitting the reign of a woman.

The father of Bertha is said to have been passionately fond of the chase, for which amusement the fair Ingoberga was too often neglected. The Queen, in her sorrow for this desertion, confided her trouble to two young girls, her attendants of honour: in an evil hour was this imprudent communication made.

One of these maidens had escaped from the distasteful retirement of a conventual life to the more attractive scenes of a court; the other, an accomplished dancer and singer, was gifted with rare personal beauty. At their artful suggestion, the Queen invented a novel amusement for her husband, in hopes of securing more of his society, on which occasion the talents of her companions were exhibited. The King's admiration, on witnessing the performance prepared for his enjoyment, passed all bounds; and the unhappy Ingoberga soon saw that her plan had but too well succeeded; the actresses in this scene were soon her declared rivals in her husband's affections. She was so indignant at the infidelity of Caribert, that she determined to mortify and humble him in return for the insult offered to herself. The father of these girls was a common wool-spinner, and Ingoberga, who was aware of the circumstance, ordered him to come to her palace, and follow his usual avocation of spinning. While he was thus employed, she took Caribert into her apartments to witness his



labours. The stratagem so enraged the King, that he immediately expelled Ingoberga from the palace, and having divorced her, Mirofede, the eldest daughter of the wool-spinner, was elevated to the post she had enjoyed, both in his throne and heart.

The Queen sheltered herself in the seclusion of a convent under her misfortune, whither she was probably accompanied by her children. She devoted herself to prayers and charitable deeds; and Gregory of Tours speaks of her as a woman of great wisdom, and constant practical piety, "unceasing in prayer, in mortification, and almsgiving;" besides which she set at liberty many persons suffering under the horrors of slavery.<sup>1</sup>

Under the superintendence of such a mother, the young Bertha had no doubt many advantages: she was possessed of great beauty and virtue, and so much esteemed for both, that even during the life of his father, the Saxon prince, Ethelbert, had made proposals for her hand. His overtures met, at first, with a decided refusal, on account of his religion; for not only Caribert and Ingoberga were Christians, but their daughter professed the same faith; while Ethelbert, and the Saxons, over whom he ruled, were pagans. Subsequently, Bertha consented to the match, on condition of being freely permitted to pursue the religious exercises in which she had been brought up,<sup>2</sup> and to enjoy the counsels of Luidhard, Bishop of Soissons (or Senlis): this request being accorded, she gave her hand to Ethelbert.

Ingoberga must have deeply felt the parting from her daughter, her two other children being separated from her; and her heart was still more wounded by the conduct of their father, whose affections, estranged from herself, had not long been retained captive by the insolent Mirofede, who had been supplanted by her younger sister.<sup>3</sup> The latter had not only procured her disgrace, but was promoted to her queenly dignity. The clergy, however, so strongly felt the disgrace the King brought on himself and the country, by marrying a nun who had broken her vows, and who was the sister of his former consort, that they excommunicated both Caribert and his wife: the former consoled himself in the society of a new favourite, but died soon after, in 670. Ingoberga survived the last of her rivals, and died A.D. 578, at the age of seventy, twenty-seven years after she had been deprived of the regal dignity.<sup>4</sup>

On the arrival of Bertha in Britain, she and her husband Ethelbert took up their residence at Canterbury. The young foreign Princess soon became very popular among the Saxons: her accomplishments won their hearts, and her irreproachable conduct their esteem: her beauty also pleaded powerfully in her favour with them. Bertha was exceedingly zealous for the propagation of her faith, and the earnestness she threw into her exertions for the good cause ensured success. She made use of every legitimate art which her address could employ, to reconcile Ethelbert to the principles of Christianity, and her exertions were at length

<sup>1</sup> Of this, Ingoberga is one of the earliest instances on record.

<sup>2</sup> Turner, Bede, Huntingdon.

<sup>3</sup> *Anecdotes des Reines et Régentes de France.*

<sup>4</sup> Mezeray, Hume, *Anecdotes des Reines et Régentes*, &c.

successful. Pope Gregory the Great, for that end, had employed the zealous Augustine; but the honour of so great an enterprise as the bringing of a whole nation from the darkness of paganism to the light of the Gospel, is mainly due to the influence of Bertha.

Besides Luidhard, several French chaplains attended on her, and an old temple, situated a little without the walls of Canterbury, had been assigned to her use for the performance of Christian worship.<sup>1</sup> Many persons about the court of Ethelbert, who soon after succeeded to the crown, were disposed in favour of the new faith by the exemplary conduct of Bertha and Luidhard.<sup>2</sup> Some were made at once converts, others were willing to become so: such being the state of affairs in Kent, Bertha, perceiving the harvest was plentiful, but the labourers few in number, made an application for help in her pious labours; first to the French, her own countrymen, and failing there, probably from the influence of her mother's rivals at court, appealed next to the Pope. Gregory the Great, the reigning Pontiff, was ambitious on his own part, of shining in an undertaking so glorious as the conversion of Britain.

The Pontiff's feelings had first directed him to the enterprise, at the sight of some beautiful children exposed in the Roman slave mart;<sup>3</sup> and, when, in answer to his inquiry whence they had come, he was told they were Angles: "Not Angles, but angels,"<sup>4</sup> if converted," was his celebrated punning reply. The circumstance had fixed the desire on his mind; when, therefore, Bertha, "Queen of the Angles," and the daughter of Ingoberga, whose piety was known, and whose humane interest had so often set captives free, made an appeal to him on a subject which he had so warmly espoused, he lent a willing ear to her request.

Regarding her favour, protection, and influence, as happy omens for the success of a Christian mission, he deputed Augustine, a monk of Rheims, and forty other persons, among whom were Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, and Rufinian, to undertake a voyage to Britain, to accomplish the arduous enterprise.

It was a perilous undertaking, in the opinion of the Roman missionaries, who, before they had proceeded many miles, sent back Augustine to the Pope, with an entreaty that they might be excused from the office, and not be sent to a fierce and infidel nation, whose language they did not understand. Gregory would not admit their expostulations, and having written to that effect, exhorting them to persevere, they proceeded on their unwelcome expedition, taking with them French interpreters. They performed the voyage safely, and landed in the Isle of Thanet. On their arrival, they informed Ethelbert that they had come to offer him heaven

<sup>1</sup> Bower's History of the Popes; Butler's Lives of Saints.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, Bower, &c.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory is said to have written to Candidus, steward of the patrimony of St. Peter in France, to buy such English slaves as were to be sold in that country, under the age of seventeen or eighteen, and send them to Rome to be brought up in the monasteries. As they were pagans, the Pope desired they might be attended in their journey by a Presbyter to baptise them, should he find any of them in danger of dying on the road. [Bower's History of the Popes.]

<sup>4</sup> Bede.

and eternal happiness, in the knowledge of a God, with whom the Saxons were unacquainted.

Ethelbert, through Bertha's influence, received the messengers of Christ with hospitality, and at the end of a few days appointed a meeting with them in the Isle of Thanet. It was a Saxon superstition that spells were ineffectual in the open air, and on this account, it was arranged that the interview between Ethelbert and Augustine should not take place in any dwelling.

The procession of the Papal missionaries bore in its front a standard, on which was depicted a silver cross, with an image of our Saviour painted; as it advanced, litanies were chanted. Ethelbert's apprehensions were increased at the unusual spectacle; but the priestly train having taken seats by his command, the Gospel was preached and listened to with the utmost attention by the Kentish King.

Ethelbert was not immediately convinced of the truth of the new doctrine propounded; he, however, graciously replied to Augustine and his followers, of whose sincerity he was fully persuaded, promising that no opposition should be offered in his endeavours to obtain converts; but, on the other hand, that they should be entertained during their stay in Britain. He accordingly ordered suitable provision to be made for their maintenance, and assigned for their abode a mansion in the city of Canterbury.<sup>1</sup> By their holiness of living and excellent precepts, the priests obtained, from that time, universal respect and subsistence through the beneficence of Ethelbert, and the patronage of such Saxons as were won over to their belief. They daily performed the services in the church, which was dedicated to St. Martin,<sup>2</sup> in presence of the Queen, who went thither to pray. This ancient edifice, still used for divine service, stands on the side of a hill rising on the left hand of the road leading to Deal, within half a mile of the city walls; the body of the church is built of Roman bricks, of an architecture prior to the Saxon invasion.

The learning, piety, and good example of the excellent Queen Bertha amply supported the Roman missionaries, in this their original condition, and her zeal and piety were eventually rewarded by the conversion, not only of the King, her husband, who was first to embrace the new faith, but of the whole nation, who followed the example of the throne. So much may be accomplished by individual exertions; in spite of a weak frame, a mighty and a powerful heart can achieve wonders; and thus had Bertha the glory of succeeding in her vast design of turning thousands from darkness and ignorance to the light and knowledge of the purest faith. The King was baptized on Whitsunday, A. D. 597, about a year after the arrival of Augustine.<sup>3</sup> Many others received the holy rite, un-

<sup>1</sup> Their lodging is said to have been in the parish of St. Alphege, in a place called Stablegate, which was then used as an oratorium by the King's household. [Thorne, Coxe, Roger of Wendover.]

<sup>2</sup> Augustine and his followers first met to sing, to pray, to say mass, and to baptise in St. Martin's Church, till, on Ethelbert becoming converted, they gained permission to build new and repair the old churches throughout his dominions.

<sup>3</sup> MS. Chronicles of Canterbury; Dugdale.

biassed in their persuasion; for Ethelbert, though he now seconded the Papal emissaries, desired that nothing should be done by compulsion. The very ancient font which still exists in the Church of St. Martin, at Canterbury, is said to be the same that was used at the baptism of Ethelbert.

A small edifice of great antiquity, called St. Pancras Chapel, had been used by the Saxon King, prior to his conversion, as a private temple. It still stands to the east of the hospital in Canterbury, and to the south-east of St. Augustine's monastery. The materials and architecture are Roman, and it is only thirty feet long by twenty-one in breadth. St. Martin's Church is some distance to the east of St. Pancras.

The chapel of St. Pancras was afterwards purified by Augustine, and the idol placed in it was broken. The edifice was dedicated by the Roman bishop in the name of St. Pancras, a youth of fourteen, who suffered martyrdom under the reign of Dioclesian, in the persecution, A. D. 304. This was the first church dedicated by Augustine, and the altar in the southern porch, at which, after Ethelbert's conversion, he was accustomed to celebrate mass, still stands there; it occupies the spot on which had been placed a statue of the King.

Ethelbert was not content with patronising Augustine and his followers; upon his conversion he resigned his palace in Canterbury for their use, and retired to Reculver, in the Isle of Thanet, where he erected a royal residence for himself and his successors.

According to Bede, there was already in existence, in the east part of Canterbury, when Augustine arrived, a building of about two or three hundred years old, which occupied the site of the present cathedral, and was the same as that given to the Roman missionaries. Augustine repaired and enlarged the edifice, dedicating it in the name of Christ.

In 938 this church had become little better than a ruin by the attacks of the Danes, the walls being uneven, and in some places broken down, and the roof in so threatening a condition it could not be entered with safety. The fabric was repaired by Archbishop Odo; but the roof he built was burnt by the Danes, 1011, and only the walls remained. Canute restored the edifice; but, after his time, it again fell to decay, so much so, that in 1070 Lanfranc was compelled to rebuild it almost from the foundation, though even then the ancient walls were not entirely thrown down.

Behind the choir of Canterbury Cathedral, in the chapel of the Holy Trinity, erected about A. D. 1184, in honour of St. Thomas à Becket, stands the ancient patriarchal chair, in which the archbishops are enthroned; and which, tradition records, was the regal seat of the Saxon Kings of Kent. It is formed of three pieces of grey marble, cut in panels; the under part being solid, like that of a seat cut out of a rock.

The under-croft, or crypt, over which the choir of Canterbury Cathedral is raised—undoubtedly the most ancient part of the building—is considered Saxon, and supposed to be that part of the old edifice left standing by Lanfranc. The walls are perfectly destitute of ornament, and everything presents the aspect of the most venerable antiquity. Of the pillars, some are round, others twisted, and neither in shafts nor capitals



are there two of them alike. The circumference of most of the shafts is about four feet, and the height of shaft, plinth, and capital, only six feet and a half. From these spring semicircular arches, making a vaulted roof of the height of fourteen feet.

The church architecture of the Saxons seems to have been of the Roman style, and an adaptation of the buildings found by them on their arrival here. The Britons had, shortly before the coming of the Saxons, besides their wattled and wooden churches, some stone edifices, like those of St. Martin and St. Pancras, at Canterbury, but not constructed in a style resembling the edifices which followed the doctrines of the supreme Pontiff. "They had no crypts under them for reliques; they were not supported by arches and columns; these arches and columns were not adorned with the images of saints and legendary stories; their shape was not cruciform; they had no oratories in the aisles, nor were they glazed. This was the *Roman style*, as precisely delineated by Bede, Eddius, Richard Prior of Hexham, and contradistinguished from the British."<sup>1</sup>

Before Augustine's time many Saxons had been converted by the Welsh and Irish clergy, but their native buildings were as mean as the British. After the arrival of the Roman missionaries, and the conversion of Ethelbert, it became fashionable to adopt whatever was connected with the Papal power, and to decry the native arts. At a later period the Saxon prelates were either educated at Rome, or attached to its doctrines, hence they patronized the Roman style of architecture in the edifices erected under their superintendence in Britain. Of this number were Ninian, who built the stone church at Whitherne<sup>2</sup> (Candida Casa) in Galloway; Benedict Biscop, founder of one at Weremouth; Naiton, who solicited Abbot Ceolred to send him architects to construct a church after the Roman fashion; and Wilfred, who built the church at Hexham, with others mentioned by Bede. As the Saxons, at their coming to Britain, did not understand masonry, they had to send for foreigners to build their churches and monasteries. Thus the sculptures which adorn our capitals and arches, and are designated the Saxon ornaments and Saxon style, were not *invented*, but patronized by that people, and were as different as possible from the British forms of architecture, being derived from the more cultivated and polished Romans.

There had been established in Britain, long before the arrival of Hengist, a Roman architecture: while the same style as our Anglo-Saxon churches is found to prevail in the East, to the surprise of those who know that those buildings were erected prior to the arrival of the Saxons in Britain. All the principal churches in the East were, however, built by a British Queen, as related in the Life of St. Helena, to whom the Pope compared the pious Bertha, Queen of Ethelbert; and they, like the Anglo-Saxon churches, had a Roman origin. Helena was the greater part of her life in Britain, and her husband Constantius was a great architect, which facts simplify the whole matter.

The crypt or undercroft of Canterbury Cathedral, ascribed by Arch-

<sup>1</sup> Ledwich.

<sup>2</sup> Lappenberg.

deacon Batteley to the believing Romans,<sup>1</sup> "remained unalterably the same amid all the conflagrations and repairs the cathedral underwent,"<sup>2</sup> and singularly enough, the *capitals* of the columns, and the Egyptian hieroglyphical figures upon them, carry us back to the age of Constantine, "son of Helena," who had served in the Egyptian wars under Galerius. These figures are delineated by Ledwich in his interesting work.<sup>3</sup>

Bertha, anxious to promote the good cause, and spread the Gospel to the farthest bounds of the kingdom, engaged some persons to come over to her from France to assist in the pious undertaking. Gregory, on his part, enjoined Augustine to remove the idols from the heathen altars, but not to destroy the altars themselves; because the people held the spot sacred, and would therefore be more likely to carry on the Christian worship in its precincts. The people were in the habit of feasting at their pagan festivals, on the offerings of the altar, after they had been presented, together with their priests: the Pope desired Augustine not to encourage such entertainments among the converted Anglo-Saxons. By his order Augustine visited France, and was ordained Archbishop of the

<sup>1</sup> Osborne says it was founded before A. D. 742.

<sup>2</sup> Ledwich.

<sup>3</sup> Antiquities of Ireland (Observations on Saxon and Gothic Architecture).

No. 1 has on it the cat, adored in Egypt, and supposed to supply a cure against the bite of asps and other venomous animals: a symbol of Isis.

No. 2. An Egyptian grotesque—a hawk killing a serpent. The hawk worshipped in Egypt for freeing the country from snakes, scorpions, and other reptiles.

No. 3. An ideal quadruped, resembling the Egyptian gryphon, having the beak, talons, and wings of an eagle, and body of a lion. The gryphon was sacred to Osiris. It is here represented killing some noxious bird or serpent.

No. 4. A gladiator or criminal engaged with a lion.

No. 5. A horseman with a cap and trowse.

No. 6. A sheep, to which the Egyptians paid divine honour.

No. 7. An equestrian figure.

No. 8 is a purely Egyptian figure—a double-headed Anubis bestriding a double-headed crocodile; Anubis being inseparably the companion of Isis.

No. 9. A man sitting on the head of another, holding in one hand a fish, and in the other a cup: an allusion to Isis.

No. 10. A double-headed monster.

No. 11. A bird destroying a crocodile, or some serpent of the lizard kind.

No. 12. A satyr resting on two deer.

No. 13. Two birds on a Roman masque.

No. 14. A grotesque, with the head and comb of a cock, the body and arms human, the shoulders winged, with the feet and tail of a satyr, playing on a violin with a bow; behind is a scalene triangle. Opposite is another grotesque, blowing a trumpet, with the head and horns of a goat, the lower extremities human. That these are Egyptian hieroglyphical figures is confirmed by various authors. The triangle denoted Orus, son of Isis and Osiris. From the figures on the capitals contained in the crypt, it was likely to have been an Iseum or Roman chapel, sacred to Isis, and an early imitation of Roman models. There seems little doubt that this building was erected long prior to the coming of the Saxons, by the Romans, most probably under Constantine. The grotesques exhibited on the capitals were mostly confined to crypts, and derived from the eccentricities of Egyptian superstition. Similar instances are to be seen in the vaults at Hexham, which, like Canterbury, was a Roman station; and in which may be found fragments of Roman inscriptions, grotesque figures, and much carved stone work." [Porphyry, Tertullian, Montfaucon, Hutchinson.]

English by the Archbishop of Arles. After he returned, he sent a deputation to Rome, to inform the Pope of the success of his mission, and to request the solution of some theological questions. An embassy from Gregory brought back the answers required, with instructions to the priests to exert themselves in the diffusion of the light of the Gospel; they brought over vessels and vestments for the altar, copes, relics, &c., with a letter and presents to King Ethelbert. The Pope's letter to the Anglo-Saxon monarch, bears date the 10th day of the Calends of June, A. D. 601,<sup>1</sup> and may be seen in Bede, or in the History of Radulf de Diceto: the one here transcribed is from the latter:

*"Pope Gregory to Ethelbert, King of the Angles."*

"Glorious son, guard with solicitude the faith which thou hast divinely received. Hasten to spread the Christian faith among the peoples subject to thee; multiply the zeal of thy rectitude in their conversion; proscribe the worship of idols, and destroy their temples. For God himself will render the name of your glory even more glorious to posterity, seeking as you do his honour among nations saved. So it was that Constantine, the most pious Emperor, reclaimed the Roman state from the profane worship of idols, and subjected it to Almighty God. And thus it came to pass, that this man vanquished by his praises the fame of the ancient princes, and surpassed his predecessors by continued well-doing."

*"Pope Gregory to Bertha, Queen of the Angles."*

"We bless Almighty God, who hath graciously vouchsafed to reserve for your reward the conversion of the people of the Angles. For, as through the memorable Helena, the mother of the most pious Constantine, Emperor of the Romans, the hearts of the Romans were kindled to the Christian faith; so, by the zeal of your glory, we are confident the mercy of God is operating among the people of the Angles."

*"Pope Gregory to Augustine, Bishop of the Angles."*

"Who may suffice to recount what gladness has arisen in the hearts of all the faithful, that the people of the Angles, by the operation of the Almighty's grace, and by thy brotherly labour, have, upon the expulsion of the darkness of error, been penetrated by the light of the holy faith; that with integrity of mind they now trample on the idols to which an insane fear had before subjected them; that they are prostrated before Almighty God in a pure heart; that from the lapses of wickedness they are tied to the restraints of holy preaching; that in soul they are brought under, and in understanding are lifted up to, the divine precepts; that they humble themselves even to the earth, in order that their mind may not rest in earth. Of whom is this work but of Him who saith 'My father worketh hitherto, and I work.'"

Many rich vestments, vessels, relics, and a pall, given by St. Gregory to St. Austin, were afterwards kept in the monastery of St. Austin, at Canterbury. Their original inventory, drawn up by Thomas of Elmham, in the reign of Henry the Fifth, is preserved in the Harleian Library,

<sup>1</sup> Bede.



and published by Mrs. E. Elstob, at the end of a Saxon panegyric on St. Gregory.

"The pall sent by Gregory, was for Augustin to say mass in. This *pallium* sent by the Popes to archbishops, is an ornament worn upon their shoulders, with a lappel hanging down upon the breast and back. It is made with white lamb's-wool and spotted with purple crosses."<sup>1</sup> The first Christian Emperors gave this imperial ornament to eminent bishops; it is recorded as one of the gifts bestowed by the British Emperor Constantine on Pope Sylvester.

The letter of Gregory to Augustine directs that the pallium shall only be worn during the solemnity of mass. It likewise directs that bishops for twelve places, subordinate to his own see, shall be appointed, amongst which was to be one for London, who was to be consecrated by his own synod, and to receive a pallium from Rome. A bishop of York is to be ordained, with power to ordain twelve subordinate bishops, and the Pope expresses his design of bestowing on him also the pall. The Bishop of London was to take precedence of his brother Bishop of York, as being first ordained, but to have no power over him.

Mellitus, the Roman Abbot, who came to England in 601, was consecrated by Augustine, Bishop of London, 604, and having succeeded Laurentius in the Archbishopric of Canterbury, died April 24, 624.

There had been a progression of events, meanwhile, in other parts of Britain. Three more kingdoms, Northumberland, East Anglia, and Essex, had become established; the last of these was founded by Uffa, the survivor of twelve Saxon princes, who had landed on the eastern coast of Britain about five years after Bertha's marriage. Redwald, King of the East Angles, had been brought up in the pagan doctrines; but, through the incessant exertions of King Ethelbert, was led to renounce the worship of idols, and in 609 was baptized at Canterbury.<sup>2</sup> The dominions of Redwald comprised Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, the Isle of Ely, and part of Bedfordshire.<sup>3</sup> The Kings of East Anglia had several royal residences, one at Rendlesham in Suffolk, and another at Ely: at the first of these Redwald built a church, on his conversion to Christianity. The principal abode of Redwald was at Kaninghall, of which the ruins are yet to be seen, near which coins and various antiquities have from time to time been dug up; and Thetford, another royal abode of East Anglia, is even now filled with ruins of religious houses above all other towns in England.

The conversion of Redwald led to very important results. The court of this Prince had become the asylum of the fugitive Prince Edwin, who, when an infant, had been deprived of his patrimonial inheritance, the crown of Northumberland, by Ethelfrid the Wild, who had married his sister Acha, both being children of Alla, first King of Deira. Finding, after a time, that his life was no longer secure at the Northumbrian court, Edwin sought the protection first of Cadwan, King of Wales, who dwelt at Caer Segont, whose wife was a relation of Quenburga, his own consort,

<sup>1</sup> Butler.

<sup>2</sup> Rapin, Turner, Butler.

<sup>3</sup> Usher, Whittaker, Butler.



daughter of Ceoil, King of Mercia. The protection afforded by Cadwan, gave umbrage to Ethelfrid, who shortly after repudiated Acha.

Edwin, however, finding that Cadwan was in danger from his stay, left his retreat, and wandered from court to court, no Prince daring to protect him, through dread of his formidable enemy. Such was his life during twenty-seven years, until, at the age of thirty, he obtained an asylum with the East Anglian King, and by his amiable qualities and noble demeanour, engaged the respect and esteem of Redwald and his subjects. Ethelfrid offered rich presents to the East Anglian, to induce him to deliver up his guest, or put him secretly to death; but the King after withstanding many such offers, at last was tempted to *deliberate*, feeling his inequality in strength to Ethelfrid.<sup>1</sup> At this moment, which threatened such peril to Edwin, an unexpected friend arose. The unfortunate Prince was made acquainted by the Queen of Redwald of what had transpired. His confidence in her husband's honour and generosity had at first won her regard, and his many amiable qualities riveted her esteem.

Edwin would not avail himself of the opportunity thus afforded for escape, but waited calmly the result. Meanwhile, the Queen sought her husband. Availing herself of her well-known influence, this noble-spirited woman resolved, if possible, to save her husband from the dishonourable act he was about to commit. She told him: "It stood not with the high and sacred state of a King, to buy and sell the bodies of men, as it were a petty chapman; or that which is more dishonourable and slave-like, to sell away his faith, a thing which he ought to hold more precious than all the gold and gems of the whole world, yea, than his own life."<sup>2</sup>

While Edwin was, therefore, yet occupied in pondering over this unexpected turn of affairs, the messenger of the Queen, whose name, which should have been written in letters of gold, as a glory to her sex, is unfortunately lost, informed him that Redwald had been inspired with better thoughts, and refused to yield up his guest.<sup>3</sup>

The Queen carried her generous influence yet further; for, at her request, Redwald levied an army, and marched against Ethelfrid. The Northumbrian King was slain in the engagement which followed, when Redwald completed his triumph, by entering Northumberland as its conqueror; and far from taking for his own any portion of that district, placed Edwin in security on the throne of his ancestors.<sup>4</sup> This magnanimous conduct procured for Redwald the dignity of Emperor of the Saxons in Britain, and entitled him to be called the "*British Aristides*."

The "Villa Regia," or seat of the Northumbrian monarchs, was Osmundthorpe, in Yorkshire; at which place may still be seen a piece of stained glass, representing a King with a crown, sword, and shield, bearing the arms of the Kingdom of East Anglia, while a local tradition relates, that at that spot, Edwin, King of Northumberland, was hospitably entertained by Redwald, and reinstated in his dominions.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of this fine action, worthy of a Christian, after returning into

<sup>1</sup> Hume, Rapin.

<sup>2</sup> Camden, from Bede.

<sup>3</sup> Rapin.

<sup>4</sup> Allen's History of York.

<sup>5</sup> Hutchinson, Rapin, Hume.

East Anglia, Redwald is said to have relapsed into idolatry, the very same year,<sup>1</sup> though without wholly forsaking the Christian faith; for, in the temple in which sacrifices to Odin were performed by his order, was contained two altars, *one dedicated to Christ, and another to idols*. The latter, Bede assures us, lasted to the time of Adulf, King of East Anglia, his own contemporary, who mentioned that he had seen it when a boy. So singular a combination rather promoted than retarded the progress of Christianity, by awakening the attention of the people. The return to idolatrous worship of Redwald, is ascribed to the influence of his Queen, who is described by Langhorne as "a woman of great mind and remarkable prudence, but too much given to idolatry." Guthrie says: "Though she possessed the virtues, she had not the graces of Christianity, being averse to its religion; yet, the generous protection she afforded to Edwin, and the noble sentiments with which she inspired her husband, together with the great veneration the nation had for her family, give us the highest idea of her spirit and good sense."<sup>2</sup>

At a subsequent period, Ethelburga Tate, the daughter of Queen Bertha, became the wife of Edwin, with whom, perhaps, an acquaintance had commenced at the court of Redwald, during his exile.

The husband of Queen Bertha, besides assisting Sebert, his nephew, (converted through his means), in the erection of the Monastery of St. Peter's, Westminster, built the Cathedral of Rochester, which he dedicated to St. Andrew. To him belonged the glory of abolishing idol-worship throughout his dominions, and of either closing the temples of paganism, or converting them to the service of Christ. In all his great undertakings, Ethelbert was assisted by Queen Bertha, though her name does not prominently appear, except on the occasion of the grand religious revolution, brought about through her pious zeal, and which may be said to have occasioned an intercourse with foreign countries, which greatly tended to improve the Saxons.

The remains of Queen Bertha, whose death preceded that of Ethelbert, were deposited, at her death, in the porch of the Church of St. Martin, at Canterbury, where also rested those of the future saint, Augustine, who died before his regal friend and patron, and of Luidhard, the French bishop,—the new cathedral of Canterbury being yet unconsecrated.<sup>3</sup>

After the loss of Bertha, Ethelbert, probably feeling the blank in his domestic happiness occasioned by that circumstance, married a second Queen; yet at his own death, in 616, he was buried by the French Princess's side, in St. Martin's Porch, within the Church of St. Peter

<sup>1</sup> Echard, Guthrie.

<sup>2</sup> Sigebert, her son by a former husband, being sent to France on her marriage to Redwald, the usurper of his rights, became the dependant guest and *protégé* of Clothair, the French monarch, and eventually, on the death of his half-brother, Earpwoold, mounted the East Anglian throne. Edwin, restored to his inheritance of Northumberland, declined, on Redwald's death, the proffered crown of his benefactor, awarding it to his son Earpwoold, whose mother had so befriended him in adversity.

<sup>3</sup> Chron. of W. Thorn.

and St. Paul.<sup>1</sup> His remains were afterwards deposited under the high altar in the same church,<sup>2</sup> and a light was kept constantly burning before his tomb.<sup>3</sup> The memory of his piety and virtues caused him to be afterwards canonized as a saint, and to be honoured, on February 24th, the day of his death, in Roman and Saxon martyrologies under the name, endeared in our own times, of *Albert*.

The epitaph on Queen Bertha, preserved by Leland, may be translated thus:—

“Adorned with virtues, here lies the blessed Queen Bertha, who was in favour with God, and greatly beloved by mankind.”

About the middle of the eighth century, another Queen of Kent distinguished herself by her exertions in favour of Christianity. This was Aldeburga, wife of Ethelbert, who reigned jointly with his brother, Eadbald, A.D. 725. While the King, her husband, was still a heathen, Aldeburga re-established the deserted church of St. Martin, and the hymn and the prayer were again heard within its consecrated walls.<sup>4</sup>

In 616, Archbishop Lawrence consecrated the new edifice at Canterbury, and removing the body of St. Augustine thither, buried it in the north porch.

If Ethelbert's object in choosing a second consort had been to secure a protector for his young family, he certainly erred in judgment; for his second consort was unworthy to succeed the pious Bertha. Eadbald was his father's successor, and had no sooner mounted the throne, 616, than he married the Queen, his mother-in-law, with whom he was passionately in love, she being very young and very beautiful.

Laurentius, successor of Augustine, finding not only that Eadbald, after this marriage, had returned to idolatry, but that his example had influenced his subjects to do the same, prepared to depart into France, his preaching here producing so little fruit: Mellitus and Justus, his companions, had already quitted the country, but he resolved, before he did so, to make one more effort to reclaim the abandoned son of the great Ethelbert and pious Bertha, the protectors of the Christian faith. He was perhaps the more induced to take this step, by the fact that Eadbald, since his crime, had “been troubled with frequent fits of madness, and oppressed of an evil spirit,”<sup>5</sup> his guilty conscience being its own accuser. Suddenly appearing before the King, the good prelate threw off his vestments, exhibiting to Eadbald a body torn with stripes and bruises. The King inquired who had dared to treat in such a manner one of so high a rank as the Archbishop; when he was told that St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, had appeared to him in a vision, and bestowed on him that

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1 The ridiculous Latin lines upon Ethelbert, given by Stowe and Weever, are thus rendered:—

“King Ethelbert lieth here,  
Closed in his polyander:  
For building churches sure he goes  
To Christ without meander.”

“Rex Ethelburtus hic clauditur in polyandro,  
Fana pians certe Christo meat abque meandro.”

<sup>1</sup> Bede.

<sup>2</sup> Polydore Vergil.

<sup>3</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>4</sup> Bede.



chastisement, with a severe reprimand, for his intending to desert his charge. Eadbald was so struck by the miracle, that he returned to his former faith, and divorcing himself from his mother-in-law, received the rite of baptism from Laurentius. The people, imitating their ruler, were also restored to the faith of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Mellitus and Justus were recalled from France by Eadbald, the former to the see of Rochester, and the latter to that of London, but the Londoners could not be persuaded to receive him, Eadbald having less influence than his father. The King passed the rest of his life in piety and penitence; and to expiate his sins, founded a college within the walls of Dover Castle, which Wightred, one of his successors, removed into the town, and stored with twenty-two canons, dedicating it to St. Martin, A. D. 725.<sup>2</sup>

The converted King married Emma, daughter of Theodobert, King of Austrasia, now Lorraine. This lady became the mother of three children, Ermenred, Ercombert, and Enswitha. The eldest son died in his father's lifetime, but Ercombert was destined to revive the faded glory of his family; Enswitha, emulating the piety of her grandmother Bertha, of blessed memory, founded the Abbey of Folkestone, in Kent, and, having assumed the religious habit, presided over it as abbess till her death, when her name and virtues were enrolled in the saintly calendar, August 31st, the day of her departure from this life.

Eadbald reigned twenty-five years, and dying, was interred near his father, in a little chapel built by himself, in honour of the Virgin Mary. Queen Emma, whom one of our poets<sup>3</sup> has designated as—

“Lady Emme, of France the chosen flower,”

died the following year, and was laid by the side of her husband, both their remains being deposited at the altar of St. John.

<sup>1</sup> Rapin, Hume.

<sup>2</sup> This edifice was afterwards rebuilt, in Henry the First's reign, by Archbishop William Corbeil, A. D. 1132, whose successor, Frebold, placed Benedictine monks in it, and called it “The New Work at Dover.” It was surrendered November 16th, 27 Henry VIII., the yearly value being £232 10s. 5½d.

<sup>3</sup> Bradshawe.



## ETHELBURGA "THE SILENT," AND ENFLEDA,

### QUEENS OF EDWIN "THE GREAT" AND OSWY.

Marriage of Ethelburga to Edwin—Paulinus—His zeal—The Life of Edwin attempted—A daughter, Enfleda, born—She is dedicated by her father to God—Pope Boniface—His letters—Coiffi, the priest—His famous speech and act—Edwin becomes a Christian—Hilda first appears—Numerous converts in Northumberland—Edwin's progresses—The Tûfa—Edwin killed in battle against Penda—Eadfrid murdered—Ethelburga seeks protection with her brother, the King of Kent, accompanied by Paulinus—She sends her sons to France: they die there—She founds a nunnery, and takes the veil—Her acts of charity—The Danes—Enfleda demanded in marriage by Oswy—The voyage and the jars of oil—The marriage—Enfleda builds the Monastery of Tinemouth—Wilfred—Enfleda's daughter dedicated to God—Cædmon, the poet—The Synod at Whitby—The mother and daughter—The spirit of the Abbess.

THIS lady who, unlike the generality of her sex, became renowned for taciturnity, and Enfleda, her daughter, were Queens of Northumberland. Their history being intimately connected, it has been thought better to unite the record of their lives.

Ethelburga "Tate," or "the Silent," was the daughter of Ethelbert and his pious Queen Bertha, and was educated in the Christian faith. Ethelburga's beauty and virtues were destined to atone to Edwin the Great, King of Northumberland, for his many troubles.

Edwin was twenty-three years of age when he mounted the throne, and at the time when he married Ethelburga, was in his thirty-first year. Quenburga, whom he had espoused when very young, had not lived to behold her husband reinstated in his rights: she died while he was an exile, leaving two sons, Osfred and Edfred.

It was about the year 624 that Edwin sent ambassadors to the court of Kent, to demand the hand of the Princess Ethelburga. Her parents were dead; but their son Eadbald sat upon the throne, and Edwin was most desirous to strengthen himself by an alliance with him. Eadbald gave his consent to his sister's marriage; but not without making certain stipulations, which were rendered necessary by Edwin's being a follower of Paganism. As Ethelburga was a Christian, her brother required that she should be allowed to follow that religion without restriction, and be permitted to have her own ministers to officiate. Edwin, on receiving this answer by his ambassadors, undertook that he would not in any way whatever oppose the Princess in her religious exercises, but would, on the contrary, permit her, and all whom she might bring with her, to

follow their faith according to the principles of Christianity. More than this, he declared that he would himself embrace that doctrine, if, on examination by means of wise men appointed for the purpose, it should prove more holy and worthy of God than his own. On this, Ethelburga was promised to Edwin, and Paulinus, "a man beloved of God," ordained bishop, that he might accompany the royal bride into Northumberland.<sup>1</sup> It was hoped that this excellent prelate, by his daily exhortations, and exercising the mysterious offices of the faith, would not only confirm the hearts of the Princess and her attendants, but prevent their becoming corrupted by the society of the Pagans.<sup>2</sup>

The marriage of Ethelburga, the Christian, to the Pagan King, Edwin, was solemnised at the royal city of York, A.D. 625.<sup>3</sup>

It was on Easter Sunday, in 626, the year following, that an attempt was made on the life of Edwin, by a person in the employ of the King of Wessex. Eumer—for so the man was called—under pretence of conveying a message, obtained admittance to the royal presence, when, drawing his dagger, he rushed on the King. The faithful Lilla, one of Edwin's officers, perceiving his master's danger, interposed his own body, and received the wound, which had been dealt so violently that the dagger, after piercing Lilla, even wounded Edwin; before, however, the assassin could repeat the blow, he was despatched by the royal attendants.<sup>4</sup>

Scarcely had the grateful King returned thanks to the gods for his own preservation, when Paulinus appeared with the welcome tidings that his Queen Ethelburga had just been safely delivered of a daughter, its birth supposed to have been hastened by the alarm of the recent event. Paulinus immediately gave thanks to Christ for both these joyful occurrences, and upon that, strove to persuade the King that through his prayers to the Saviour, Ethelburga had been enabled to bring forth her child in safety. Edwin, delighted with the words of the priest, and the happy tidings of which he had been the bearer, promised, that in case God would grant him life and victory over the King who had armed the hand of an assassin against him, he would renounce the worship of idols. As an earnest of this promise, he delivered over his newly-born daughter to Paulinus, to be forthwith consecrated to the service of Christ. Enfleda—for that was the name bestowed on the royal infant—was the first baptized of the Northumbrian nation. The solemn rite was performed on Whitsunday, and twelve other members of the royal family were baptized with the little princess.<sup>5</sup>

Malton, in Yorkshire, was the birthplace of Enfleda, and the scene of Edwin's escape from the dagger of Eumer. The King had a royal villa at this place, where he was at that time residing. Brompton, a village between Malton and Scarborough, was another royal residence of the Kings of Northumberland.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The first Abbot of Bardney, named Deda, according to Bede, described Paulinus as tall of stature, a little stooping, his hair black, his visage meagre, his nose slender and aquiline, his aspect both venerable and majestic.

<sup>2</sup> Bede.

<sup>3</sup> Hutchinson, Harding.

<sup>4</sup> Hume.

<sup>5</sup> Bede.

<sup>6</sup> Allen's History of York.

As soon as Edwin recovered from his wound, which was at first alarming, he marched against the West Saxons, and having defeated his enemies, put to the sword all those who had sought his life.<sup>1</sup>

His consort, emulating the glory of her mother Bertha, had, in the meantime, left no argument untried which could influence her husband to adopt the Christian faith, and extended the same care towards his Northumbrian subjects.<sup>2</sup> Pope Boniface, learning the exertions made by Ethelburga for the propagation of the doctrines of Christ, encouraged the undertaking, by himself addressing a letter to Ethelburga, exhorting her to persevere in her holy purpose; he sent, at the same time, a letter to her royal husband. Of these letters, both of which are preserved by Bede, we select that addressed to Ethelburga, who was the undoubted means of introducing the faith into Northumberland.

“The copy of the letter of the most blessed and apostolic Boniface, Pope of the city of Rome, to Ethelburga, King Edwin’s Queen.

“To the illustrious lady, his daughter, Queen Ethelburga, Boniface, Bishop, servant of the servants of God. The goodness of our Redeemer has, with much providence, offered the means of salvation to the human race, which he rescued by the shedding of his precious blood, from the bonds of captivity to the devil: so that making his name known in divers ways to the Gentiles, they might acknowledge their Creator by embracing the mystery of the Christian faith, which thing, the mystical regeneration of your purification, plainly shows to have been bestowed upon the mind of your highness by God’s bounty. Our mind, therefore, has much rejoiced in the benefit of our Lord’s goodness, for that he has vouchsafed, in your conversion, to kindle a spark of the orthodox religion, by which He might the more easily inflame in His love the understanding, not only of your glorious consort, but also of all the nation that is subject to you. For we have been informed by those who came to acquaint us with the laudable conversion of our illustrious son, King Eadbald, that your Highness also, having received the wonderful sacrament of the Christian faith, continually excels in the performance of works pious and acceptable to God; that you likewise carefully refrain from the worship of idols, and the deceits of temples and auguries, and having changed your devotion, are so taken up with the love of your Redeemer, as never to cease lending your assistance for the propagation of the Christian faith. And our fatherly charity having earnestly inquired concerning your illustrious husband, we were given to understand, that he still served abominable idols, and would not yield obedience or give ear to the voice of the preachers. This occasioned us no small grief, for that part of your body still remained a stranger to the knowledge of the supreme and undivided Trinity. Whereupon we, in our fatherly care, did not delay to admonish your Christian Highness, exhorting you, that with the help of the Divine inspiration, you will not defer to do that, which, both in season and out of season, is required of us; that with the co-operating power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, your husband also may be added to the number of Christians, to the end that you may thereby enjoy the rites of marriage

<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson and Burke.

<sup>2</sup> Hume.



in the bond of a holy and unblemished union. For it is written, 'they shall be in one flesh.' How can it be said, that there is unity between you, if he continues a stranger to the brightness of your faith, by the interposition of dark and detestable error? Therefore, applying yourself continually to prayer, do not cease to beg of the Divine mercy the benefit of his illumination; to the end, that those whom the union of carnal affection has made in a manner but one body, may, after death, continue in perpetual union, by the bond of faith. Persist, therefore, illustrious daughter, and to the utmost of your power, endeavour to soften the hardness of his heart, by insinuating the Divine precepts; making him sensible how noble the mystery is which you have received by believing, and how wonderful is the reward, which, by the new birth, you have merited to obtain. In flame the coldness of his heart by the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, that by the abolition of the cold and pernicious worship of Paganism, the heat of Divine faith may enlighten his understanding, through your frequent exhortations; that the testimony of the Holy Scripture may appear the more conspicuous, fulfilled by you, 'The unbelieving husband shall be saved by the believing wife!' For to this effect you have obtained the mercy of our Lord's goodness, that you may return with increase the fruit of faith, and the benefit intrusted in your hands; for through the assistance of His mercy, we do not cease, with frequent prayers, to beg that you may be able to perform the same. Having premised thus much, in pursuance of the duty of our fatherly affection, we exhort you, that when the opportunity of a bearer shall offer, you will, as soon as possible, acquaint us with the success which the Divine power shall grant by your means, in the conversion of your consort, and of the nation subject to you; to the end, that our solicitude, which earnestly expects what appertains to the salvation of you and yours, may, by hearing from you, be set at rest; and that we, discerning more fully the brightness of the Divine propitiation diffused in you, may, with a joyful confession, abundantly return due thanks to God, the giver of all good things, and to St. Peter, the prince of the apostles."

This letter finishes with a trait of friendliness somewhat singular, and no doubt agreeable to the female receiver: "We have, moreover, sent you the blessing of your protector, St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, that is, a silver looking-glass, and a gilt ivory comb, which we entreat your glory will receive with the same kind affection, as it is known to be sent by us."

The letter of Pope Boniface to Edwin was, in like manner, accompanied by presents: these were, "a shirt with one gold ornament, and one garment of Ancyra,<sup>1</sup> named in the epistle. Edwin had, in the first instance hesitated to embrace the new doctrine, but the efforts of Ethelburga were destined to be crowned with success. The King had promised her that he would examine the foundations on which the new faith rested, and that if he found them satisfactory he was willing to become a convert.

<sup>1</sup> Ancyra or Angora, a city of Galatia, spoken of by Pliny and Strabo, formerly the seat of the Gauls. It was there that the particular kind of cloth made of goats' wool was dyed, and underwent the process called *camlet*, which "gave it its water colour."



Accordingly, he held several conferences with Paulinus, canvassed the arguments he proposed with the wisest of his counsellors, retired frequently from company, to resolve in solitude that all-important question, and at length came to the desired conclusion.

A year had passed in anxious deliberation on the truth, when, "attended by Paulinus, Edwin entered the great council, requested the advice of his faithful Witan, and exposed to them the reasons which induced him to prefer Christianity to the worship of paganism. Coiffi, the high priest of Northumbria, was the first to reply, whose faith was shaken by repeated disappointments. He attempted to prove the futility of the pagan religion by his own misfortunes, and avowed his own resolution 'to listen to the reasons, and examine the doctrine of Paulinus.' He was followed by an aged thane, whose discourse offers an interesting picture of the simplicity of the age. 'When,' said he, 'O King, you and your ministers are seated at table, in the depth of winter, and the cheerful fire blazes on the hearth in the middle of the hall, a sparrow, perhaps chased by the wind and snow, enters at one door of the apartment and escapes by the other. During the moment of its passage it enjoys the warmth; when it is once departed, it is seen no more. Such is the nature of man. During a few years his existence is visible; but what has preceded or what will follow it, is concealed from the view of mortals. If the new religion offer any information on subjects so mysterious and important, it must be worthy of our attention.' To these reasons the other members assented. Paulinus was desired to explain the principal articles of the Christian faith; and the King expressed his determination to embrace the doctrine of the missionary. When it was asked, who would dare to profane the altars of Woden, Coiffi accepted the dangerous office. Laying aside the emblems of the priestly dignity, he assumed the dress of a warrior, and, despising the prohibitions of the Saxon superstition, mounted the favorite charger of Edwin. By those who were ignorant of his motives his conduct was attributed to temporary insanity. But disregarding their clamours, he proceeded to the nearest temple, and bidding defiance to the gods of his fathers, hurled his spear into the sacred edifice. It stuck in the opposite wall; and, to the surprise of the trembling spectators, the heavens were silent, and the sacrilege was unpunished. Insensibly they recovered from their fears, and, encouraged by the exhortations of Coiffi, burnt to the ground the temple and the surrounding groves."<sup>1</sup>

Alcum has celebrated the fame of Coiffi in his poem on the Church of York.

The King, now changed in heart as well as doctrine desired to receive the rite of baptism, which was performed with much solemnity during the festival of Easter, at the Church of St. Peter, in York, Paulinus himself officiating. On this great occasion, which took place A. D. 627, many Northumbrians, both of the nobility and meaner classes, received the same rite. Of the number was Hilda, a young Saxon girl of royal birth, being great-niece of Edwin: then she was fourteen years of age

<sup>1</sup> Bede.

only, but she lived to become one of the most distinguished characters of her time.

The simple church whose interior was the scene of this imposing spectacle, so new and interesting in a nation of unbelievers, at the time was constructed of wood, but was afterwards re-edified with stone by the King, who made it a cathedral, constituting Paulinus archbishop of the see.

Crowds now began daily to flock to Paulinus to receive the baptismal rite, and it is on record of that venerable prelate that, being at one time staying with the King and Queen at Yeverin, in Northumberland, he was employed for six-and-thirty days, from morning till night, in instructing the throng that pressed forward to receive the new doctrine, whom he baptized in the river Glen. Churches and oratories were as yet unbuilt, and thus, as among the primitive Christians, rivers were brought into use by Paulinus, especially the Swale, as at the royal mansion in the neighborhood of that river Paulinus most commonly resided with the King.<sup>1</sup> Edwin is also said to have dwelt at Auldby, about six miles from the city of York. Christianity had now fairly dawned on Northumberland.

The Roman altars and temples had been laid in the dust, and a general indifference to religion prevailed at the time when Saxon mythology was introduced; and this was now supplanted by the pure doctrine of a revealed religion, which quickly spread, and with such good effect throughout the north, that it is said, a woman and her infant might have passed, without danger or damage, from sea to sea,<sup>2</sup> so rare had acts of injustice become.

Having procured peace with the other Kings, his contemporaries, Edwin employed himself in progresses through his own territories, for the redress of the injured—enacting just laws for the public protection. He carefully repaired the roads throughout Northumberland, making them safe and commodious; and so minutely did the King regard the comfort of his people, that every spring by the way-side was provided with a bowl, for the refreshment of travellers.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, by his nobleness and intrepidity of character, Edwin became renowned as the greatest Prince of the Saxon Heptarchy. "His dignity," says Bede, "was so great throughout his dominions, that his banners were not only borne before him in battle, but even in time of peace: when he rode about his cities, towns, or provinces, with his officers, the standard-bearer was wont to go before him. Also, when he walked along the streets, that sort of banner which the Romans call *Tufa*, and the English *Tûf*, was, in like manner, borne before him." This was a globe, or a tuft of feathers, fixed on a spear.

It was unfortunate for Northumberland to lose so good a monarch in the zenith of greatness. After a reign of seventeen years' duration, Edwin, in the forty-eighth year of his age, perished in battle against Penda, King of Mercia, together with Osfred, his youngest son by Quen-burga: Eadfrid, the eldest-born, afterwards imploring the protection of

<sup>1</sup> Lives of the Saints.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Hutchinson.

Penda, who was his relative, was murdered by him in violation of his oath.<sup>1</sup>

Edwin had four children by Ethelburga; two of whom only survived him, Ulkfren and Enflæda. The claims of these children of Edwin were set aside in favour of Eanfrid and Osric, of whom the former took possession of Northumberland, and the latter of Deira; while the people, strange to say, after such an example, on losing their Christian King, reverted to a state of paganism.

Ethelburga adopted the alternative which alone remained for safety to herself and family. Taking with her, her children, and Uffi, the son of Osfred, who was now an orphan, she determined to seek the protection of Eadbald, King of Kent, her brother, who had married Emma, a French princess. Accordingly the Queen placed herself and family under the protection of Bassus, a faithful chieftain, and fled by sea into Kent, A. D. 627, where the royal fugitives were honourably received, first by Honorius, and afterwards by Eadbald himself; who bestowed on Paulinus, the faithful friend and adviser of his sister, who accompanied her on this occasion as in all others, the see of Rochester, in which he passed the remainder of his days; bequeathing to the church there, at his death, the pall which he had received from the Roman Pontiff.<sup>2</sup> A great number of precious ornaments, which had belonged to King Edwin, were conveyed by Paulinus into Kent at the same time; among them were a large golden cross and a golden chalice, consecrated for the service of the altar, which were preserved in the Church of Canterbury.<sup>3</sup>

Ethelburga retained her daughter with her, but fearing her sons' safety insecure in this country, sent them together to the court of her relative, King Dagobert, in France, where they afterwards died. When she first arrived from Northumberland, Eadbald had presented her with some land in Kent, where the royal widow founded a nunnery, afterwards dedicated to the honour of the Virgin Mary and St. Mildred, one of the later abbesses. This was the first founded of the three celebrated Kentish monasteries; the second, at Folkstone, being built by Enswitha, daughter of Eadbald; and the third, at Minster, in Thanet, by Queen Dompna, in A. D. 664.<sup>4</sup> Ethelburga's was founded in 633,<sup>5</sup> when the amiable Queen exhibited to the English people the novelty of a Christian widow taking the veil,—a step which, from her high example, afterwards became customary amongst the Queens of the Anglo-Saxons.<sup>6</sup>

From this time till her death Ethelburga devoted herself wholly to acts of charity; and when snatched from the world, she was interred in the nunnery of which she had been the foundress. That edifice, afterwards converted to a monastery at a later period, suffered much from the rapacity of the Danes, by whom it was rifled no less than three times in the space of thirty years, during the ninth century: it came at last to

<sup>1</sup> Lingard, Hume, Hutchinson. The remains of Edwin were interred at Streaneshalch, or Whitby, which became the repository of those of the different members of the Royal Family.—*Howel*.

<sup>2</sup> Mac Cabe.

<sup>3</sup> Bede.

<sup>4</sup> Phillipotts.

<sup>5</sup> Smith's Notes on Bede.

<sup>6</sup> Hutchinson, Leland.



the see of Canterbury.<sup>1</sup> The memory of St. Edwin the Great was honoured till the time of Henry VIII.; and a small church in London, near Newgate, some have conjectured was named after St. Ewen, or Andoeni.<sup>2</sup>

Oswy, and his brother Oswin, meantime had divided between them the Northumbrian monarchy, the former governing in Bernicia, the latter in Deira.<sup>3</sup> It is not certain whether Ethelburga was yet alive when an embassy arrived at the court of Eadbald from the former of these princes, demanding the hand of her daughter, the Princess Enflada, in marriage. The account of this embassy is very interesting, and characteristic of the times. Oswy commissioned Utta, "a man of great gravity and sincerity," who was much esteemed for his good qualities and truthfulness of character, to become his ambassador into Kent. Utta was commanded to travel by land to his destination, but to return home by sea; on which account he addressed himself to Aidan, Bishop of the Church of Deira, during the reigns of Oswy and Oswin, beseeching his prayers for the prosperity of his voyage. Aidan blessed Utta and his companions, and commended them to the protection of Heaven, delivering to Utta, at the same time, some jars of hallowed oil, with these words: "I foresee that whilst you are at sea, a sudden tempest will come upon you; remember to cast into the troubled waters the oil that I give you, and speedily the tempest shall be assuaged, and the sea be calmed, and you shall have a prosperous voyage." All these things were fulfilled according to the prophecy. Enflada and her train had to encounter a tempest on their way to Northumberland, the account of which is given by Bede, who had been told the story by one who had it from Utta's own mouth.<sup>4</sup>

Eadbald had, as we have seen, not only the honour of giving his sister Ethelburga in marriage to Edwin, but afterwards of bestowing her daughter Enflada on Oswy. It is necessary to mention here the relationship which existed between King Oswy and the Princess of Kent. Edwin, father of Enflada, was brother of Acha, wife of Ethelfred the Wild, and therefore uncle of her son Oswy. Thus, Enflada and Oswy were first cousins; at the time of her marriage, which took place A. D. 642, the Princess was only in her sixteenth year, while Oswy was about thirty. She was fortunate in her match, for he was one of the most interesting princes of whom we read in the history of the Saxon Heptarchy.

Treading in the footsteps of her illustrious mother and grandmother, Enflada distinguished herself not only by the patronage she afforded to religious men, but by the religious edifices she founded. Not long after her arrival in Northumberland, Oswin, her husband's brother and partner in the government, was slain at Gilling, near Richmond, in Yorkshire; and the Queen built a monastery on the spot, which we learn was completed before the year 659, the Abbot of which, Trumhere, was afterwards made Bishop of the Mercians. No trace of the edifice now re-

<sup>1</sup> Camden, Dugdale, Butler.

<sup>2</sup> It stood at the north-east corner of Warwick-lane.

<sup>3</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>4</sup> Hutchinson's Durham, Biog. Brit.



mains, it having been entirely destroyed, A.D. 897, by the Danish chiefs, Hinguar and Hubba.<sup>1</sup>

Trumhere, who was the third bishop in Mercia, was an Englishman, and related to Queen Enfleda. He had been instructed and ordained in Scotland, and Oswy, at the solicitation of his Queen, had granted him the place where Oswin had been slain, on which he built the Abbey of Ingethlingum Gilling, of which he himself became Abbot; whether this was the same edifice raised under Enfleda's patronage, or one adjacent, does not appear.<sup>2</sup>

The Monastery at Tinemouth was likewise built by Enfleda, in commemoration of St. Oswin,<sup>3</sup> whose shrine was there preserved.

"Queen Enfled, that was King Oswy's wife.  
King Edwin, his daughter, full of goodnesse,  
For Oswyn's soule a minster, in her life,  
Made at Tynemouth, and for Oswy causeles  
That hym so bee slaine and killed helpeles;  
For she was kin to Oswy and Oswyn,  
As Bede in chronicle dooeth determyn." — Harding.

Enfleda bestowed her royal patronage on one who was destined to attain the greatest celebrity; this was Wilfrid, a Northumbrian, who, when very young, came to York, where Oswy held his court. On his arrival he was introduced to Queen Enfleda, who, seeing the youth, then only fourteen, was handsome, polite, and in every respect of a promising appearance, offered him a situation at court. This was worth the acceptance of Wilfrid, but he modestly declined the favour, telling the Queen that his disposition induced him to seek for retirement. On which Enfleda, pleased with that declaration, promised to use every means in her power to facilitate the execution of his design. She accordingly placed him under the care of a chief officer of the King's household, who was engaged to go to the Monastery of Lindisfarne, with the intention of entering that religious community. The isle of Lindisfarne, on the coast of Northumberland, was the episcopal seat of Aidan, an Irishman, and a Culdee of Iona, who had been sent for by Oswald, who bestowed it on him as an episcopal see, and in person attended his ministry. When Aidan preached, as he did not perfectly understand the Anglo-Saxon tongue, the King was interpreter; for during his exile in Ireland he had learnt the language of that island. Aidan's preaching was recommended by his practice. Bede says: "He was a man of the greatest modesty, piety, and moderation; having a zeal for God, but not fully according to knowledge, for he kept the Lord's Day of Easter according to the custom of his country." Under this famous prelate Wilfrid passed some years in study, and the exercise of Christian piety, at the end of which time his observation leading him to discern errors in the Church of the Scots, he resolved to visit Rome, for the purpose of learning the rites of

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale, Tanner.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> The death of Oswin, with which Oswy appears to be chargeable, from the lines cited, is said to have taken place in 651. He is described as having been "tall and handsome in person, affable in manners, and courteous to rich and poor," which caused him to be "beloved by all." — Holinshed.

the Church in that city. Having obtained the consent of the brethren, and taken leave of the Abbot of Lindisfarne, Wilfrid repaired to his friend and patron, Queen Enfleda, and acquainted her with his design. The resolution of the youth pleased that royal lady, who accordingly sent him into Kent, where her cousin Ercombert had succeeded to the throne of Eadbald, and requested that King to send him to Rome in an honourable manner.

The request of Elfleda was attended to, and Wilfrid was accompanied on the occasion of his journey by another youth, Benedict, or Biscop, who also desired to visit the city of the apostles; this pair afterwards make a great show in Anglo-Saxon history.<sup>1</sup>

Enfleda had borne her husband a daughter, called Elfleda, who, when only a twelvemonth old, was dedicated, by a vow of King Oswy, to serve God in a state of perpetual virginity. On the occasion of the sanguinary battle of Winwidfield, near Leeds, Oswy vowed, prior to the engagement, that if God would grant him the victory, he would not only so consecrate his infant child to His service, but would also build a monastery to His honour. The day was gained by Oswy; King Penda, his enemy, with many nobles, fell on the field, and the vow was duly performed.<sup>2</sup> To signalize his gratitude, Oswy commenced, in the year 657, building the famous double monastery of Whitby, then called Streaneshalch from a watch-tower or light-house which stood on the cliff on the eastern side of the harbour; it was situate on a bold and precipitous shore. The monastery was designed for monks and nuns of the Benedictine order, though Malmesbury says it was for women only, and the King invited the celebrated St. Hilda to undertake the government of the double community.<sup>3</sup> This royal lady the sister of Hereswide, Queen of the East Angles, who was noted for her exceeding piety and great goodness, had been invited by St. Aidan to come over from France, on the death of her sister, and had settled in a small nunnery on the river Were; she remained there one year, at the end of which she was made Abbess of the numerous society congregated in the Monastery of Hartlepool. From this place, at the end of several years, she was called, by the message of King Oswy, to superintend the Monastery of Whitby. This religious foundation, which was built by Oswy, and dedicated to St. Peter, always bore the name of its first Abbess, so great was the veneration in which St. Hilda was held by the people there.

The princess Elfleda, agreeably to her father's vow, had been professed a nun in the monastery where Hilda at that time resided; but on the holy Abbess removing to Streaneshalch, went thither also, and first becoming a novice, ruled afterwards over the establishment.<sup>4</sup>

Cædmon, the great poet of the Anglo-Saxons, owed his first patronage to the Abbess Hilda, and the earliest specimens of literature of that era were produced in the Abbey of Whitby. Bede says: "There was in this house a brother, who, when he heard verses out of Scripture, would, with much sweetness and humility, turn them into English poetry." The

<sup>1</sup> Lives of the Saints, Bede.

<sup>3</sup> Allen, Butler.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed, Allen's History of York.

<sup>4</sup> Holinshed, William of Malmesbury.

books of the convent were in the Latin tongue, used also in the greater part of the service; but Cædmon rendered the Scriptural subject into the vernacular tongue. This man was only a neat-herd, and he dreamt that a stranger came to him and bade him compose a song. He replied, "I cannot;" but the command was repeated, and a subject, "the creation of all things," given. The wondering cow-herd awoke at dawn of day, and proceeded to the steward of the household of the Abbess Hilda, to relate this wonderful dream, and the verses he had in his sleep composed. This person conducted him to the presence of the venerable Abbess, who was surrounded by scholars and learned men; he was ordered to repeat his verses. He did so, to the delight of his attentive audience. His powers of poesy were found to be no dream, but a waking reality; and Hilda earnestly encouraged him to continue to compose his poems in his native Saxon tongue, to assist him in which efforts she transferred the peasant to the school of her convent, and diligently and unremittingly superintended his education. This was no mean alteration in the fortunes of Cædmon, for the school of Hilda was the nursery of the great men of her times. Six of her scholars subsequently were elevated to the episcopal chair: Bosa, John of Beverley, and the second Wilfrid, filled successively the See of York; Hedda became Bishop of Wessex, and Tatfrith and Ostforus Bishops of Worcester.<sup>1</sup>

At the time that Hilda was Abbess of Whitby,<sup>2</sup> a famous synod was held there, to fix the time for the celebration of Easter; great differences having previously existed in the British Church on the subject of Easter, which was kept by the British after the manner of the Eastern Church, on the fourteenth day after the full moon, on whatever day of the week it happened, and not on Sunday, as we at this day observe it.<sup>3</sup>

The following interesting account of this memorable council is extracted from the late Dr. Lingard's invaluable work on the Anglo-Saxon Church:—

"Oswy and his people followed the Scotch missionaries, but Queen Enfleda, who had been educated in Kent, and Oswy's son Alchfred, who attended the lessons of St. Wilfrid, adhered to the practice of the Romish Church. Thus, Oswy saw his own family divided into opposite factions, and the same solemnities celebrated at different times within his own residence. Desirous to procure uniformity, he summoned the champions of each party to meet him at Whitby, and to argue the merits of their respective customs in his presence, A. D. 664. On the one side stood Agilbercht, a Gallic prelate, at that time Bishop of Winchester, who chanced to be on a visit to the King; with Romanus, the chaplain of Queen Eanfled; Wilfrid, the chaplain of Prince Alchfred; and Jacob, a deacon, who had remained in Northumbria ever since the flight of Paulinus. On the other, were ranged Colman, the Bishop of Lindisfarne; Cedd, who had been ordained by the Scots Bishop of the East Saxons; the Abbess Hilda, and the Scottish clergy. Both Agilbercht and Colman, as foreigners, were but imperfectly acquainted with the vernacular language. Agil-

<sup>1</sup> Bede.

<sup>2</sup> Allen's York.

<sup>3</sup> The best account of the Easter controversy will be found in Dr. Smith's Appendix to Bede's Ecclesiastical History, No. 9.



bercht, therefore, placed the defence of his cause in the hands of Wilfrid; but Colman would not accept the services of a substitute, and Cedd was appointed his interpreter,—an office which he discharged to the satisfaction of all parties.

“The King, after a short preface on the benefit of uniformity, called upon Colman to begin. He alleged, in defence of the Scottish custom, first, the example of St. John the Evangelist, who was said, in books, to have kept Easter on the fourteenth day of the lunar month; second, on the Paschal canons of Anatolius, which ordered it to be kept on the same day; and on the practice of Columba, and his successors in the isle of Iona, by whom he (Colman) had been educated, and appointed Bishop of Northumbria. Wilfrid, in answer, said, that Colman was in error with respect to St. John, who, at a time when condescension was requisite, kept the Pasch at the same time with the Jews, on the fourteenth day, whether it were a Sunday or not; whereas, the Scots kept it only on that day, when it happened to fall on a Sunday; neither could he appeal to the Paschal canons of Anatolius, for Anatolius followed a cycle of nineteen years, which the Scots did not; a manner of reckoning, by which he never kept the Pasch till the fourteenth day was begun; whereas the Scots often kept it before the thirteenth day was ended. With respect to the practice of the Abbots of Iona, an obscure isle in the Scottish sea, their authority ought not to prevail against that of the universal Church, and the decree of the great Council of Nice.

“Colman rejoined that these abbots were holy men, who could not be supposed to have done wrong; to which Wilfrid replied, that, cut off as they were, by their situation, from the rest of the world, they might be excused under the plea of ignorance; but that, if Colman and his clergy, now that they knew the decrees of the Apostolic See, or rather of the universal Church, refused to conform, they would undoubtedly sin. Columba might have been a great man, but Peter was a greater, on whom our Lord had built his Church, and to whom he had given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. At these words Oswin, who had hitherto been silent, exclaimed, ‘Colman, is it so?’ Receiving an answer in the affirmative, he resumed with a smile, ‘Who then is the greater in heaven, Columba or Peter?’ All replied, ‘Peter.’ ‘Then,’ said the King, ‘will I obey the decrees of Peter; for if he, who has the keys, shut me out, who is there to let me in?’ The bystanders applauded the witticism; and the conference broke up. The result was, that Hilda and Cedd, and several of the Scottish clergy, passed over to the party of Wilfrid; and Colman, after a short interval, taking with him his own adherents, and about thirty natives, returned to his parent monastery in the Isle of Iona.<sup>1</sup>

“The conference at Whitby established harmony in the Anglo-Saxon Church, but the Picts, Scots, and Britons, maintained their opinion for many years after. In 701, Adamnan, Abbot of Iona, who had adopted

<sup>1</sup> Colman, a monk of Iona, and successor of Finan as Bishop of Lindisfarne, disliking Oswin’s decision against the British mode of keeping Easter, threw up his bishopric, and returned to Ireland, where he built two monasteries. He wrote a book in defence of his own opinion relative to the keeping Easter, another on the ecclesiastical tonsure, and an exhortation to the inhabitants of the Hebrides.



the Roman method during his visit to the court of Alfred of Northumberland, reclaimed the northern tribes. In 710, Naitan, King of the Picts, after consulting Ceolfred, Bishop of Wearmouth, ordered the Roman computation to be followed throughout his dominions; but it was not till 715 that the monks of Iona, whom Adamnan could not convert, yielded the point to the arguments of Egbert, an Anglo-Saxon missionary. Elfod, Bishop of Bangor, established the Catholic computation of Easter, in North Wales, in the middle of the eighth century, and still later, in 777, in South Wales, from which time no more controversies have arisen on that subject."<sup>1</sup>

This celebrated council derives no small interest from the fact of its having united, in a view to obtain an insight into the truth, so many of the most celebrated individuals of that age.

Oswy died A. D. 670, his reign having lasted twenty-eight years, and was interred in Streaneshalch monastery, with truly regal solemnity. The widowed Queen, retiring to that place, which contained the last remains of her beloved husband, assumed the religious habit, having determined, like her mother, Queen Ethelburga, to pass the remainder of her life in the exercises of religion. The next ten years from that time, the royal mother and daughter resided together among the holy sisterhood, over which St. Hilda presided. In 680, that pious Abbess departed this life in her sixty-sixth year, after having passed through a long and trying illness, when the Princess Elfleda was elevated to the situation left vacant by her loss, the Queen continuing still to reside with her daughter.

As late as 1776, it was an opinion entertained there, that Hilda rendered herself at times visible, on particular occasions, in the Abbey of Streaneshalch, or Whitby, where she so long presided. At a particular time of the year, in the summer months, at ten or eleven in the forenoon, the sunbeams fall in the inside of the northern part of the choir; and it is then that the spectators, who stand on the west side of Whitby churchyard, so as to see the most northerly part of the abbey, past the north of Whitby Church, imagine they perceive in one of the highest windows there, the resemblance of a woman arrayed in a shroud. Though we are certain this is only a reflection, caused by the splendour of the sun's beam, yet report says, and it is constantly believed among the vulgar, to be an appearance of Lady Hilda, in her shroud, or rather in her glorified state.<sup>2</sup>

The Abbess Elfleda, was highly esteemed by St. Theodore of Canterbury, and by St. Cuthbert, from whom she received frequent visits; and on such occasions, it was her custom to entertain her visitors at her own table: this appears from an account given by the venerable Bede. Other authorities inform us, that the Abbess would often go abroad to make her own visits, and mingle with her own relatives. The brothers of El-

<sup>1</sup> Lingard; *Antiquity of Anglo-Saxon Church*.

<sup>2</sup> There is a tradition concerning the snake-stones which abound at Whitby, that the place was formerly infested by snakes, which, being driven over the cliff by Lady Hilda, lost their heads in the fall, and by her prayers were afterwards transformed into stones. — *Allen's York*.

fleda received her visits and sought her counsels. King Alfred, the youngest of these princes, was watched over by her on his death-bed; and afterwards we find the excellent Abbess striving to reconcile Archbishop Wilfrid and the party which was opposed to him. Elfleda was, indeed highly esteemed by the great men of her times, and Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, in a letter addressed to her, designates her "the wisest lady." Eddius, in his *Life of Wilfrid*, says, "that by her wise counsels, Elfleda was ever the best adviser and comforter of the whole province; and she did much service during the minority of Osred, her nephew, by her exertions for the promotion of peace."

Under the care of Elfleda, many missionaries and scholars were sent forth from the establishment.

The 51st Letter in the Collection of St. Boniface, is addressed to an abbess abroad, named Adolana, by "Elfled, handmaiden of the ecclesiastical household," who commends to her care another abbess, her own pupil, who from infancy had desired to visit Rome, and requests her to give such information as might be useful respecting the journey thither. The letter had apparently been consigned to the care of Boniface, on one of his journeys to the imperial city.

Queen Enfleda, on her death, was interred at Streaneshalch, in the Church of St. Peter, where rested the remains of Kings Edwin and Oswy, and many other distinguished persons of those times. Elfleda died at the age of forty, and was likewise interred in that edifice. The revenues of Streaneshalch had been greatly augmented by the royal daughter of Oswy and Enfleda, and the monastery continued to flourish till the year 867, when that part of England was laid waste by the Danes, and it was altogether annihilated, "so that the very name was lost in its ruins, and the place remained desolate till near the time of the Norman Conquest, when a few huts being erected in the place where the town had formerly stood, it took the name of Presteby,<sup>1</sup> because it was in the neighbourhood of the ancient residence for monks, and after that was called Whiteby or Whitby,<sup>2</sup> a word signifying "the white dwelling" or "town."

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<sup>1</sup> Allen's Hist. of York.

<sup>2</sup> This famous monastery is familiar to the lovers of romantic lore, as the scene of part of Sir Walter Scott's beautiful poem of *Marmion*, the allusions in which, relating to this celebrated pile and its rulers, and the learned notes attached, may satisfy even the most severe antiquary; few could be more instructed in the mystery of the craft than the poet, who has rendered interesting and classical every spot named in his writings.

## ST. EBBA, QUENBURGA, SURNAMED "BEBBA," AND SAXBURGA.

The child Ebba's adventures—She enters a convent—Marries Cwichelme—Seeks the court of her brother Oswald—Her influence—Quenburga—Birin—Kynigils—Saxburga repudiated—Penda's vengeance—Bebba and Bebbanburgh—Bamborough Castle—Oswald and Aidan—The silver dishes—Oswald's charity—The blessing—The Hermit's adventure—Oswald slain—The limbs of Oswald—Ostrida his niece—Ebba the Saint—The double Monastery—Saxburga and her husband reconciled—Conversions—The Plague—The Queen Regnant.

THE lives of these Queens are intimately connected; their names being repeated together in the history of their times; but though the events in which they bore a share were of importance, their individual history does not occupy a very large space.

Ebba, whose piety earned for her the honours of canonization, was the only one of the children of Queen Acha who was not the companion of her flight, after the battle in which her husband Ethelfrid the Wild lost his crown and life, Ebba, then quite a child, fell into the hands of the conquerors as prisoner; but by her quickness and intelligence contrived to elude the vigilance of her guards, and, flying from pursuit, came to the banks of the Humber, where, finding a boat, she is said to have put to sea alone, and, unaided by any human being, safely arrived at that point of land or promontory which stretches into the sea in the mouth of the Forth, and from the circumstance bore, and still bears, her name, being called St. Ebba's Head. The bishop of the diocese received the little wanderer, who assumed the religious habit, following the profession of a nun for many years, and setting an example of superior sanctity to the whole of her sisterhood.

In process of time she quitted her convent to become the wife of Cwichelme, King of Wessex, whose power was shared by Kynigils. Cwichelme was that King of Wessex, who sent an assassin to rid him of his enemy, Edwin of Northumberland, whose loyal subject, Lilla, devoted his life to save him.

Of the married life of Ebba, little is known, but on becoming a widow, she sought the court of her brother Oswald, who had succeeded to the throne of Northumberland; and there she had an opportunity of exercising her pious powers, for her brother greatly venerated her character, and was much guided by her counsels. He had married Quenburga, daughter of Kynigils, a wife worthy of so excellent a monarch; and it was while he was in Wessex, soliciting her hand, that he had the glory



of assisting Birinus, the missionary, in his task of converting the King, to whom he became sponsor on his baptism, and many of his subjects, to Christianity.

The two Kings, in commemoration of the occasion, afterwards erected Dorchester<sup>1</sup> into an episcopal see, of which Birinus was made Bishop. Oswald was united to Quenburga, and thus became both father and son to the converted monarch. Cwichelme, and his son by Ebba, were also baptized at the same time, Birinus being sponsor to the King, whose death occurred soon after his conversion.

Kynigils afterwards founded Winchester Cathedral, under the direction of the pious and successful missionary.

Although Kynigils and his brother Cwichelme had become Christians, Cenwalch, son of the former, yet remained an adherent of the Saxon idolatry, nor could any persuasions influence him to become a convert. This prince, during his father's life, became the husband of Saxburga, daughter of Wibba, King of Mercia, and grand-daughter of Crida, founder of that monarchy,—a princess, who, by her great spirit, talents, and courage, afterwards occupied an important and distinguished position in the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy. Nor was this the first matrimonial tie which had united the thrones of Wessex and Mercia. The reigning King of Mercia, the fierce and warlike Penda, who had bestowed Saxburga on Cenwalch, was only half-brother of that lady, although a son of Wibba.<sup>2</sup> His mother was a Princess of Wessex, a descendant of the noble race of the Gewissæ;<sup>3</sup> and had, besides, a daughter who married Cadwallo, King of the Britons.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, that Saxburga, and her brothers Kenwald, Eoppa, and Eawa, were the children of a different wife, is not generally known.

Saxburga was destined to experience the strangest vicissitudes of fortune; on the death of the Christian King, Kynigils, her father-in-law, A. D. 643, her husband being elevated to the throne, dismissed her from his court *with ignominy*, and gave her rank to a princess whom he "more favoured."<sup>5</sup> Historians universally admit that no just cause existed why such a step should have been taken by Cenwalch.<sup>6</sup> This took place in the year 642, but the perpetrator of such an act of injustice was condemned to undergo a severe punishment. It was not likely that Penda, the most warlike of the Mercian Kings, would permit so deep an insult to be offered to a member of his family without retribution. To avenge his half-sister Saxburga, he therefore made war on Cenwalch, and succeeded in expelling that King from his dominions about the third or fifth year of his reign.<sup>7</sup> The fugitive prince was received at the court of Anna, King of East Anglia, where, for some time, he remained in security; but what became of Saxburga at this epoch of her history we are not informed.

Quenburga, sister of Cenwalch, now Queen of Northumberland, the

<sup>1</sup> In Oxfordshire, formerly a city, but now a village. It first belonged to the West Saxons, and afterwards to the Mercians.

<sup>2</sup> Palgrave, Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth.

<sup>4</sup> Speed.

<sup>5</sup> Lingard.

<sup>6</sup> Speed.

<sup>7</sup> Holinshed, Palgrave, Roger of Wendover.



year following her marriage, presented her husband with a son, whom he named Ethelwold. The Queen herself had, after leaving her father's court, assumed the surname of "Bebba," which was commonly adopted by the consorts of the Northumbrian monarchs in commemoration of the wife of Ida the Firebrand, founder of that monarchy, in whose honour that prince had founded the city which, in modern times, is known as Bamborough.<sup>1</sup> Ida had originally sailed from the shores of the Baltic, with his consort Bebbra and twelve sons, at the head of a body of Angles, in a fleet of forty vessels, and was received at Flamborough Head with joy by some of his own countrymen, with whose aid he subjugated Northumberland, Durham, and some of the south-eastern counties of Scotland, founding, in the year 559, a distinct and independent monarchy.<sup>2</sup>

Though some have said that the chief town of the Kingdom of Northumberland, which gave its name of Bebbanburg to a large district or tract of land, extending southward, was named after Oswald's queen, there is no doubt that it was first called "Bebban" from the queen of Ida. It is certain that Quenburga was called "Bebba" after her union with Oswald; she is thus named by the poet Harding in his Chronicle:—

"King Oswald wedded Beblam his wife to bee,  
Kyng Kyngilles doughter full faire to see."

Oswald and his Queen resided at the royal city of Bebbanburgh, of which the following account has been given by the chaplain of Henry II., in 1192:—"Bebba is a very strong city, but not exceeding large; containing not more than two or three acres of ground. It has but one hollow entrance into it, which is admirably raised by steps. On the top of the hill stands a fair church, and in the western point is a well, curiously adorned, and of sweet, clean water."<sup>3</sup>

More modern historians thus describe this interesting spot:—

"Bamburgh Castle, in the origin, was one of the castella built by Agricola on his third campaign; the Roman wall is close to the verge of the hill on which this celebrated fortress is situated. For providing the garrison with a supply of water, which the besiegers could not cut off, there was in most castles a well, which was sometimes curiously concealed within the thickness of the walls. There are draw-wells in the Castles of Dover, Canterbury, Rochester, Colchester, Carisbrook, &c. In the old Norman town of Newcastle, the well is very curiously concealed within the wall. The great well of Bamburgh had long been forgotten, when, in December, 1770, it was accidentally discovered in lowering the floor."

The great draw-well of Bamburgh Castle is described as "a dark and rugged shaft excavated within the keep, through the rock of stone, to the amazing depth of a hundred and fifty feet," and as being "equalled only by the draw-well of Beeston Castle: this stupendous work is ascribed to the Norman Lords of Bamborough."

"The Saxon Castle of Bamburgh having been destroyed, A.D. 993, it is probable that the church shared the same fate, and remained in ruin through the chief part, if not the whole, of the dark and troubled cen-

<sup>1</sup> Bede.

<sup>2</sup> Turner.

<sup>3</sup> Simeon of Durham.

tury which succeeded. Neither the church nor the castle is mentioned again till the reign of William Rufus; but before that period the castle, at all events, had been rebuilt; and under the early Anglo-Norman kings, the vill of Bamborough rose into existence. The castle was accessible only by an acclivity winding under the south-east front, through an ancient tower; and formerly it was defended also by a ditch cut through a narrow isthmus communicating with the mainland. Within the first bailey, there is another ancient gateway; and beyond, proceeding between walls, partly of artificial masonry, and partly formed by the precipitous cliff, we pass below a massive Norman round-tower which commanded the critical pass. The inner bailey, in which the keep is situated, is a level space of great area, surrounded by various buildings, now no longer devoted to military occupations, but appropriated to ministries of charity and peace. The space covered by the walls of the castle measures eight acres; and not less than fifty-six acres of rock, warren, and sand-hills are included within its domain.”<sup>1</sup>

The youth of Oswald had been passed in exile in Ireland, and when Aidan, the Culdee, arrived to instruct his subjects in the Christian faith, the King appointed him to a see in the island of Lindisfarne, which may be seen seven miles to the north of Bamborough; the Fern isles being opposite the royal residence of Oswald, and the cliffs of Dunstanburg rising to the south.

The preaching of Aidan was so successful, that in seven days, no less than fifteen thousand persons received the baptismal rite.

King Oswald was the first prince of our Saxon rulers, who is recorded to have been served in silver dishes.

“When he was once sitting at dinner on the holy day of Easter, with the aforesaid bishop (Aidan), and a silver dish full of dainties before him, and they were just ready to bless the bread, the servant, whom he had appointed to relieve the poor, came in on a sudden, and told the King, that a great multitude of needy persons from all parts were sitting in the streets begging some alms of the King; he immediately ordered the meat set before him to be carried to the poor, and the dish to be cut in pieces and divided among them. At which sight the bishop, who sat by him, much taken with such an act of piety, laid hold of his right hand, and said, ‘May this hand never perish!’ Which fell out according to his prayer, for his arm and hand being cut off from his body, when he was slain in battle, remain entire and uncorrupted to this day, and are kept in a silver case, as revered relics, in St. Peter’s Church in the royal city.”

The Northumbrians might well obey such a ruler with love. The following distich is on record of Oswald :—

“Quis fuit Alcides? Quis Cæsar Julius? Aut quis  
Magnus Alexander? Alevedes se superasse  
Fertur; Alexander mundum, sed Julius hostem,  
Se simul Oswaldus, et mundum vicit, et hostem.”<sup>2</sup>

Queen Bebbra was herself as much celebrated by her admirable con-

<sup>1</sup> Gibson.

<sup>2</sup> Camden.

duct, as the saintly King, her husband, for his holiness of life. Of this, the following instance has been transmitted by one of our chroniclers:—

“A hermit, of extraordinary sanctity, desirous of ascertaining whether any other person surpassed himself in purity of life, was, in answer to his meditations, told by revelation, “that King Oswald was more holy, though he had wedded a wife.” To the King accordingly the pious hermit repaired, desiring, with holy zeal, to be informed concerning his “course of life.” On which Oswald, in the true spirit of that love and confidence which reposed on the purity and virtue of his beloved partner, referred the hermit to her, bidding him carry to her his ring with his commands, “that she should entertain him as though he were her own royal spouse.” Queen Bebba failed not in strictly obeying her lord’s mandate; but, while she shared with the holy man the regal repast, she showed him that it consisted only of bread and water, no other food being permitted to him, thus exhibiting an example of that self-denial by which purity of life is alone attainable. When night came, the hermit, expecting to pass it as Oswald himself was in the habit of doing, was more surprised than pleased when the Queen caused him to be cast into a cold water bath, according to the habit of the prince he wished to imitate!

“Gladly, and right early on the morrow, did the venerable man take leave of the Queen, and, having restored to King Oswald his ring, frankly acknowledged that his own entire life was not so holy as one of his days and nights.”<sup>1</sup>

No further mention of Queen Bebba is made till after Oswald’s death. The title of Bretwalda,<sup>2</sup> or Emperor, was accorded to this King in the year of his son Edilwold’s birth; peace and plenty were the characteristics of his reign. At last Penda, King of Mercia, envying his neighbouring potentate’s prosperity, took up arms against him. The two kings fought at Maserfield, in Shropshire, August 5th, 642, and Oswald fell in the engagement. The spot where the monarch was slain was called from the circumstance, Oswald’s tree, abbreviated into Oswestry.<sup>3</sup> The cruel victor caused the body of the prince to be cut into pieces, which, being stuck on stakes, were dispersed over the battle-field as so many victorious trophies. Some old verses say that it was the head and hands only of the unfortunate prince that were thus exposed; the translation is as follows:

“Three crosses raised at Penda’s dire commands,  
Bore Oswald’s royal head and mangled hands,  
To stand a sad example to the rest,  
And prove him wretched who is ever blest.  
Vain policy! for what the victor got  
Proved to the vanquish’d king the happier lot;  
For now the martyr’d saint in glory views  
How Oswy with success the war renews:  
And Penda scarcely can support his throne,  
Whilst Oswald wears a never-failing crown.”<sup>4</sup>

The Church, to which Oswald was justly dear, rendered every posthu-

<sup>1</sup> Harding’s Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> An imitation of the dignity of Emperors of the West.—Lappenberg.

<sup>3</sup> Pennant’s Wales.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



mous honour to his memory, and not only was he raised to the dignity of a saint, but his claim to the honour was supported by various miracles.<sup>1</sup>

The widowed Queen Bebba had used the interest of her brother-in-law Oswy, the now reigning monarch, to obtain from Cadwealla permission to bury the head and arm of Oswald.

Hardinge in his quaint chronicle has these lines :

“King Oswy to Cadwall did enclyne,  
And Oswald his hed and arme had leue to burye,  
Which he betoke to Queen Bebla in hye,  
Who closed them in silver fayre and ciene,  
And them betooke to Saynte Aydan, I ween.”

The venerable Bede records the same. “Oswald’s head and arm were conveyed by King Oswy to the sorrow-stricken Queen, who religiously enshrined the precious relics in a silver case and conveyed them to St. Aidan, by whom they were carefully deposited in St. Peter’s Church, in the royal city of Bebbanburgh.”

Of Bebba we learn no more. Her infant son was deprived of his inheritance for a time by the usurpation of Oswy: at the death of that king he mounted the throne, being but sixteen years of age at the time, and preserved his power during the remainder of his life, transmitting it when he died, to Alfred, the natural son of Oswy.

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<sup>1</sup> An engraving in Strutt’s *Regal Antiquities*, represents the King setting out with his army against the Mercian monarch, and, in another plate, gives a delineation of the battle, with Oswald falling from his horse, wounded by the Mercian king. These drawings are taken from a MS. (Harleian, 1981) preserved in the Royal Library at the British Museum; which, by the writing and dress of the figures, appears to have been written and illuminated at the commencement of the fourteenth century. They are contained in a psalter at the bottom of the leaves. The MS. was presented to Queen Mary, in 1553, by Baldwin Smith, a citizen of London.

The town (which is near Severus’s Wall) taking the name of Oswald’s Tree, from the cross or tree the King had erected there. The MS. account of the town, written in 1635, has the following: — “There was an old oake lately standing in Mesburie, within the parish of Oswestry, whereon one of King Oswald’s arms hung, say the neighbours by tradition.”

Oswald’s Well is situated a little to the west of the free-school of Oswestry, and is supplied by a spring flowing from the elevated ground above it. The well is a small square basin, in a recess formed by a stone wall, and arched over. On the back is a rudely sculptured head of King Oswald, and the front was secured by an iron grate. A second recess of the same kind is divided from the former by a slight stone wall, and in this recess there is water also, which was perhaps granted for common uses, whilst the other may have been held sacred. There was formerly a chapel or cell near it, but no vestige of either remains; and the well itself is in a very ruinous state, but the water is good. There is a tradition that when Oswald was slain, an eagle tore one of the arms from the body, and flying off with it, fell down and perished upon this spot, from whence the water gushed up, and has continued to flow ever since, as a memorial of the event. The title of “Baron of Oswaldistrie” is now held by the Duke of Norfolk. — *History of Oswestry*.

A monastery was founded on the place of Oswald’s martyrdom, dedicated to the memory of that sainted king, but no evidences either of its foundation or dissolution exist. Leland, in his time, names the cloister as having been standing within the recollection of persons then alive.



The remains of St. Oswald being afterwards found by his niece Ostrida, Queen of the Mercians, were solemnly enshrined in the Abbey of Bardney, in Lincolnshire, and the King's banner hung over his tomb at her cost, and worked by herself.<sup>1</sup> At a subsequent period, the relics of departed royalty were removed by Ethelfleda, Queen of the Mercians, to the Abbey of St. Peter at Gloucester, where they were deposited on the north side of the upper end of the choir. In that cathedral a fair monument of the murdered prince is still remaining, with a chapel set between two pillars of that church.<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Aidan,<sup>3</sup> the friend and counsellor of the ill-fated Oswald, survived his royal master nine years. In 651, when Penda, at the head of the Mercian army, ravaged Northumberland, he came to Bamborough, and sought, but in vain, to take that royal city by force. He afterwards encompassed it on the land side with wood and thatch, which he caused to be set on fire, and the flames soon rose above the walls of the citadel. Aidan was at this time on the Farn Island, two miles from the mainland; and seeing the danger of the garrison, invoked the Divine aid against the machinations of the enemy; on which, according to Bede, "the wind suddenly changed and bore the flames upon the camp of the besiegers," who were thus compelled to desist from further assault. Aidan was in the King's Vill, not far from Bamborough, when he was visited with his last illness: for he was in the habit of resorting to a church in the village of Bamborough, where a little chamber had been erected for him on the western wall of the edifice, that he might conveniently reside there when he made excursions into the adjacent country. The Bishop had other similar accommodations provided for him in several of the King's country-seats, having no place of his own but his church, and a few fields about it. In his sickness they set up a tent for him, adjoining the west side of the church of Bamborough, and there he died.

Ebba, sister of Oswald, who was aunt as well as sister-in-law of Quen-burga "Bebba," after she had returned into Northumberland, founded successively several nunneries, and became noted for her sanctity.

The nunnery upon the Derwent, in Durham, was founded by this widowed Queen of Wessex, and, from her name, called Ebchester. It was built, A. D. 660, and Oswy, brother of Oswald, assisted in this pious work, perhaps as some atonement for usurping his nephew's place. The small, irregular village of Ebchester is described by Camden as "occupying the brow of a steep declivity overhanging the Tyne."

St. Ebba, in her widowhood, resumed the religious habit which she had worn when a child, and retired to the same establishment in which she passed her early years. She was foundress of the celebrated monastery of Coldingham in the Marshes, below Berwick, in Scotland, which

<sup>1</sup> Willis's Abbeys.

<sup>2</sup> "Oswy afterwards took the head of Oswald from Bardney, and interred it in the church of Lindisfarne: it attended the faithful monks of that place in prosperity and adversity, till at length it found 'a safe resting-place in the bosom of St. Cuthbert,' where it remained until the outrages of Lee, and other malefactors of evil memory." — Gibbon, Harding, Speed.

<sup>3</sup> Brit. Sancta.

establishment she governed herself as Abbess until her death, which did not take place till she had arrived at a very advanced age. This celebrated double separate monastery was visited by the famed St. Cuthbert, by invitation of the Abbess Queen, who was desirous that her people there should be edified by the instructions of that holy man,—a request most readily complied with.

The history of St. Ebba is much connected with the public events in her time, proving the influence she maintained by her own excellent conduct.

At one period this Queen presided over Camwode Abbey, during the reign of her nephew Egfrid. St. Etheldreda, then Queen, having obtained her husband's permission to take the religious vows, professed herself a nun in Camwode Abbey, "the convent of Ebba, the King's aunt," receiving the veil from the hands of Bishop Wilfrid.<sup>1</sup> Etheldreda remained in the establishment, under the protection of St. Ebba, till her flight to Ely.

Again St. Ebba's name comes prominently forward; for Egfrid had imprisoned Wilfrid on his return from Rome; and during the space of nine months every art had been practised to induce the bishop to confess that the Pontiff's decision had either been a fabrication, or purchased by presents. Threats and promises, however, failed in moving Wilfrid, who was at length happily liberated, at the earnest prayers of the Abbess Ebba, on his subscribing to a condition that he would never more set foot within the territories of Egfrid.<sup>2</sup>

After the completion of Coldingham, St. Ebba assumed the government of the establishment, and presided over it till her death, which took place A. D. 683, having survived her husband as many as forty-five years. At some period, it is said that "St. Cuthbert informed Elfrid, a priest, by revelation, where the bones of St. Ebba and St. Ethelgifa, and many other saints, might be found, which, on his discovering the place, were first exposed by him as holy relics, to be worshipped by the people, and afterwards placed with the body of St. Cuthbert."

Cenwalch, after the just vengeance of Penda had caused his abdication, retired to the protection of Anna, King of east Anglia, a pious and excellent monarch, who took upon himself to reprove his guest freely for his ill-treatment of Queen Saxburga. Sigebert, king of Essex, also remonstrated so strongly in favour of the Queen, and so powerfully urged the principles of the Christian faith, that at last Cenwalch became a convert, and in 648 received the baptismal rite<sup>3</sup> from Felix, a Burgundian priest, who, after being seventeen years Bishop of East Anglia, was elevated to the Archbishopric of Canterbury.<sup>4</sup> An entire change seemed to have taken place in the heart of Cenwalch, who now received his Queen Saxburga back. Some, indeed, say that she had been reconciled to him prior to his conversion. The question naturally suggests itself, was this Queen herself of the Christian persuasion? Her brother Penda was

<sup>1</sup> Bradshawe's Life of St. Werburga; Richard, Prior of Hexham.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard's Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

<sup>3</sup> Bede.

<sup>4</sup> Rapin.

certainly one of the bitterest persecutors of the Church throughout the whole period of the Saxon Heptarchy. Still Saxburga might have embraced the doctrine at the time of the conversion of Kynigils, and perhaps this was the cause of her repudiation, more especially if they became reconciled to each other either on the eve of the conversion of Cenwalch or immediately after that event.

These two important events to Saxburga, her husband's conversion and her own reconciliation to him, were succeeded by another not less gratifying. Their nephew, Cuthred, son of Cwichelme, entered into a negotiation with Cenwalch relative to his restoration to his dominions. The conversion of Cenwalch first induced him to assist him in his difficulties, and to receive him at Ashendon,<sup>1</sup> in Bucks, where the preliminary arrangements were made between the two kings, and the remuneration settled upon for the services rendered by Cuthred on the occasion. It was there stipulated that all that part of the kingdom which lay northward from the river Thames, and the extent of which was computed at 3000 hides,<sup>2</sup> containing within its limits as many villages, should be held hereafter by Cuthred for his principality:<sup>3</sup> these lands granted to Cuthred lay near Ashendon, where the agreement was made, and amounted to about a third part of the kingdom of Cenwalch.<sup>4</sup> After this arrangement, Cuthred successfully aided Cenwalch in the enterprise of recovering the crown, which he had forfeited through his own errors. Cenwalch and Saxburga from that time forward seem to have lived in the most entire harmony: this lasting for a long succession of years, must have repaid Saxburga for all her past affliction. The husband, no longer a Pagan in heart, showed in every action that he was worthy to profess the mild doctrines of Christianity, and became a blessing to himself and others.

The first employment of Cenwalch on his recovery of the throne, after fulfilling his contract with Cuthred, was to complete the edifice at Winchester which had been founded by his father, and built under the directions of St. Birinus, Bishop of Dorchester. It was completed in 648, and in a style of magnificence unusual in those times. St. Birinus came to Winchester when it was completed, and solemnly dedicated the building in the name of the Holy Trinity and of Saints Peter and Paul. The same year the holy prelate died, and though in the first instance buried at Dorchester, where he usually dwelt, his remains were eventually transferred to Winchester Cathedral.<sup>5</sup>

It is not stated that either Cenwalch or Saxburga quitted Britain during the fatal visitation of the plague in Britain. The following is, however, a Welsh record concerning a princess called Saxburga, and who probably was the same:—"When the plague and famine had ceased its long ravages, those Saxons who had had the good fortune to escape, sent intelligence to Germany of the thinness of the population in Britain, represent-

<sup>1</sup> Or Æscendune, in the forest of Brentwode, included in the territory of Wessex. — Kennet, Lipscombe.

<sup>2</sup> Lipscombe's History of Bucks.

<sup>3</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>4</sup> Bede.

<sup>5</sup> Holinshed, Milner, Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.



ing how easily a new settlement might be made. Accordingly a vast number of men and women landed in the north, under Queen Sexburgis, and settled in Britain, from Norway to Cornwall, without opposition from the Britons. By 'Norway' the Welsh Chronicle here means Northumberland, sometimes called Albany. In the Highlands of Scotland two districts were formerly entitled Norway and Denmark, because colonized from those countries, which frequently occasions a confusion in the mind of readers unacquainted with the fact, when referred to in our histories under those names."<sup>1</sup> The date of that event, 664, makes it possible that this was no other than Saxburga, the Abbess-Queen of Kent.

Cenwalch survived the desolating scourge of the yellow plague about eight years, having reigned altogether thirty-one years, three of which he had passed in exile. He died in 672, giving, at the last, a most convincing proof of his respect for Saxburga, by bequeathing to her the administration of the affairs of the state, a step the more remarkable, as it was quite unprecedented. Saxburga is, in fact, the solitary instance of a Queen-Regnant during the entire dominion of the Anglo-Saxons.<sup>2</sup> The measure was imprudent; and the people, disdaining to fight under a woman, not long after the death of Cenwalch, rebelled against the widowed Queen, and displaced her from the high office which had been confided to her by her husband's will. Some, indeed, say that the Queen continued in power during the space of two years;<sup>3</sup> and others, that for half that period, her power was shared by Egwin, and that he, after her death, reigned one year by himself,<sup>4</sup> and was then succeeded by Kentwin.<sup>5</sup> However this might be, the kingdom seems to have been divided for ten years among the Ealdormen, after the decease of Cenwalch, and the short period during which Saxburga held her authority over the people. During that space of time, however brief, Saxburga proved herself in every respect worthy to discharge the duties of her office. One of our old chroniclers describes this Saxon Queen-Regnant as having "levied new forces, and preserved the old in their duty," ruling her subjects with moderation, and overawing her enemies; in short, that "she conducted all things in such a manner, that no difference was discoverable, except that of sex." It was a misfortune to her people to lose such a ruler, whose character seems to have combined some of the characteristics of her dauntless brother Penda, possessing his splendid talents without his defects.

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts's British History.

<sup>2</sup> William of Malmesbury.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew of Westminster.

<sup>4</sup> Bromton, William of Malmesbury.

<sup>5</sup> Bromton



## OSTRIDA AND WERBURGA,

### QUEENS OF MERCIA.

Ostrida marries Ethelred, the youngest son of Penda—Elfwin slain—Archbishop Theodore endeavours to reconcile the Kings—Ostrida removes the bones of Saint Oswald—Abbey of Bardney—The miracle of the pillar of light—The standard—Embroidery—The spinsters—Visit of Ethelhild—Holy dust—Its effect—Ostrida slain—Ferocity of the times—Ethelred abdicates—He becomes Abbot at Bardney—Kenred makes a pilgrimage to Rome—Werberga enters a convent.

OSTRIDA was the youngest of Oswy's daughters by his Queen, Eanfleda, and was born in the year 657, the fifteenth of her father's reign, about the period when her sister Alffeda was united to Peada, the eldest son of the Mercian King. This princess was lineally descended from Ida, founder of the Kingdom of Northumberland, on her father's side; while on that of her mother, grand-daughter of Bertha and Ethelbert, she claimed her origin from the French monarchs, and the famous hero Woden, the common ancestor of the Anglo-Saxon princes. Bradshawe, writing of Ostrida, calls her "a beautiful lady, of noble lineage, born in the north part."

The death of Oswy took place when Ostrida was only thirteen years of age, and her half-brother, Egfrid, formerly a hostage at the Mercian court, became King.<sup>1</sup> It was in the seventh year of Egfrid's reign that Ostrida married Ethelred, the youngest of Penda's sons, who had been on the throne about three years.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding this alliance, two years afterwards, Ethelred, though a peace-loving prince, made war on Egfrid, who had invaded his dominions. The cause of the dispute between these near relatives was this: some towns in Mercia had been taken in the reign of Wulphere, and Ethelred demanded restitution from Egfrid of the province of the Lindiswaras.<sup>3</sup> In a great battle, fought near the river Trent, Elfwin, a youth of eighteen, brother of Egfrid and Alffeda the former Queen of the Mercians, was unhappily slain—a prince who was dear to both nations for his mother's sake.

This painful occurrence would have caused the war to break out more fiercely than ever, but for the timely interposition of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, who succeeded in reconciling the two Kings and their people, without any one being put to death on the occasion. The usual mulct for a murder was, however, paid by Ethelred to King Egfrid.

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Speed, Palgrave, Leland.

<sup>3</sup> Natives of Lincolnshire.—Lingard, Rapin, Bede.

It is thought that the lasting peace which followed, and even Ethelred's secure possession of the crown he wore, were secured to him by the fact of his being united to Ostrida, the Northumbrian princess; for, though the *were* for Elfwin's death was paid, he recovered the possession of the disputed territories A. D. 679.

Ostrida was present at a grand general witenagemote, held at Heathfield (now Bishop's Hatfield, in Hertfordshire), by her husband, which was attended by all the chief prelates of the Saxon Heptarchy, the object of the meeting being to preserve the English Church from the heresy of the Eutyches. On this occasion, King Ethelred made large donations to the Abbey of Peterborough, besides confirming previous grants. Ostrida appended her name to the new donation made by the King at this assembly—"I, Ostrida, Ethelred's Queen, confirm it." This signature is preceded by those of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury; Wilfred, Archbishop of York; and Sexwulf, first Abbot of Peterborough, but at that time Bishop of Lichfield; and after the Queen's name appear those of Adrian, the Pope's legate; Putta, Bishop of Rochester; and Waldhere, Bishop of London. Before the grant of King Ethelred was signed, the Pope's letter was read, ratified, and confirmed by the council.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most interesting acts of Queen Ostrida was her removal of the bones of her uncle, King Oswald, to Bardney Abbey,<sup>2</sup> in Lincolnshire.

The Abbey of Bardney, founded by King Ethelred,<sup>3</sup> is thus spoken of by Bede, in his account of some miracles which attended the translation of the relics of that sainted king. "There is a noble monastery, in the province of Lindsey, called Beardeneu, which Queen Ostrida and her husband Ethelred much loved, and conferred upon it many honours and ornaments." It was here that she was desirous to lay the venerable bones of her uncle. The fulfilment of her purpose brought to light a strong point of feeling in the minds of the Mercians. "When the wagon in which these bones were carried, arrived towards evening in the aforesaid monastery, *they that were in it refused to admit them*, because, though they knew him to be a holy man, yet, as he was originally of another province, and had *reigned over them as a foreign king, they retained their ancient aversion to him even after death*. Thus it came to pass that the relics were left in the open air all that night, with only a large tent spread over them." Small respect seems here to have been shown to the wishes of the royal lady, their Queen and mistress. A miracle was requisite to discover to them their error: through the whole night, from the wagon up to the heavens, was seen a pillar of light, visible throughout the province of Lindsey; and the next day, the very brethren who had refused to receive the royal relics, prayed to God to permit them to be deposited among them. Accordingly the bones, being washed, were put into a shrine which they had made for that purpose, and placed in the church with due honour; and that there might be a "perpetual memorial" of the royal Oswald, "they hung up over the

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle, Dugdale, vol. i. 67, Turner.

<sup>2</sup> Fabian says "the Abbey of Bourdeaux."

<sup>3</sup> Willis's Abbeys.

monument his banner, made of gold and purple.”<sup>1</sup> This standard had been wrought “by no hands, as ye may guess,” but those of Queen Ostrida herself, who, by her own industry, and at her own cost, decorated the tomb in which the hallowed relics of her departed relative were deposited.<sup>2</sup>

During the seventh century, much talent was exhibited by our Anglo-Saxon countrywomen in the art of embroidery: women of the highest rank excelled in the accomplishment, and the example was followed by others. The products of this feminine industry and skill were usually devoted to the Church and its ministers,<sup>3</sup> and were esteemed so valuable as to become heirlooms, bequeathed by their owners to those most dear to them. The needles of illustrious women were busy, from the fair Ostrida, who wrought the tragedy of a murdered uncle, to the Norman Matilda, who depicted upon canvas the heroic actions of a warlike husband. The Anglo-Saxon ladies excelled in needlework and gold embroidery, and also were acquainted with the arts of weaving and dyeing. The last is alluded to by St. Aldhelm, in these words: “The shuttles, not filled with purple only, but with various colours, are moved here and there among the thick spreading of the threads, and by the embroidering art they adorn all the woven work with various groups of images.” Spinning was, indeed, so common an employment of the female sex, even among women of royal blood, that the will of King Alfred terms the members of his family who were of the female side, “the spindle side;” so that the modern term of “spinster” has descended to us in allusion to those unmarried, and able to devote themselves to feminine accomplishments more exclusively.

The banner of Ostrida is said to have been wrought of purple and gold: a robe worn by Aldhelm was constructed of a purple ground, composed of delicate thread, upon which appeared black circles; and in those circles were wrought the figures of peacocks, of an ample size. Such was the taste of the seventh century, in which age abundance of goldsmiths and jewellers were to be found ready to assist the fair patronesses of their art; of whom Bede says, that they were skilled in collecting “remarkable and precious stones, to be placed among the gold and silver, which were mostly of a ruddy or aërial colour.” It was customary with the sovereigns of the Heptarchy to present rich garments, vases, bracelets, and rings, to their witenagemote and courtiers, which example was followed by their queens-consort.<sup>4</sup>

The superstitions of the days in which Ostrida lived are well attested by the miracles related by the venerable Bede. One of those is connected

<sup>1</sup> Bede.

<sup>2</sup> Speed, Butler, Harding.

<sup>3</sup> An example of the clerical costume of the seventh century may be seen in the church of Malmsbury, in Wilts, in the figure of St. Peter, who, with other apostles, is wrought, in the south porch of that edifice, in basso-relievo: the date given by Fosbrooke is 675; the work is Saxon, and sketched in 1801. The double keys in the right hand of St. Peter (head of the Church); book, with jewels, of the New Testament in the left; the robes are becoming and well-disposed, jewels on the border of the neck, feet bare. The doorway at the entrance of the same church, exhibits the figure of a religious, in basso-relievo, dressed in the simple monk's habit, hood, &c.—*Fosbrooke's Brit. Monachism.*

<sup>4</sup> Sharon Turner.



with the Queen, who, at the time, was on a visit at Bardney Abbey. Ethelhild, sister of the abbot, came there to pay her respects to her royal mistress, from her own convent, which was not far distant. The conversation happening to turn on the uncle-saint of Ostrida, Lady Ethelhild remarked, she had been an eye-witness of the pillar of light which reached from earth to heaven, before alluded to. The Queen thereupon added, that the very dust of the pavement, on which the water that washed the bones had been spilt, had already healed many sick persons.<sup>1</sup> The abbess, upon hearing this, desired that some of the said dust might be given her, which she tied up in a cloth, and putting it into a casket, returned home. Not long after, a visitor at the monastery was suddenly seized with an evil spirit, so that none could bind him, and the abbess, with one of the nuns, was sent for to his assistance. All efforts to assuage his madness were fruitless; but suddenly the abbess had recourse to the holy dust in the casket, which she had received from Queen Ostrida. When a small portion was given to the sufferer, and after the priest had prayed over him, he had a quiet night, nor was he ever after disturbed by his old enemy. Bede, who related this adventure of Ethelhild, speaks of her as "a certain venerable abbess of that name, who is still living."

Ostrida's union with Ethelred lasted for twenty years, during which she had but one son, who received the name of Ceolred.<sup>2</sup> A sad fate overtook her soon after this period: she was upon a journey through North Mercia, and was attacked and slain by the people of the district over which her husband ruled; these were the South Humbrins, or people of the territories which lay south of the Trent. This treasonable act is supposed to have been committed by the heads of the State, who raised an insurrection to revenge on Ostrida the death of Peada, their former King, murdered by Alchflæda, the Queen's half-sister. Unlikely as such a cause might be, that circumstance having occurred when Ostrida was yet in her cradle, it has been assigned by our historians, in the absence of any evidence as to the real one which occasioned the Queen's untimely end. This tragical event affords an example of the ferocity of the times: it happened A. D. 697, Ostrida being forty years of age, half of which she had resided among the people to whom she owed her undeserved death. Ethelred had reigned twenty-three years with much honour, when he was bereaved of his consort. The little care taken either by himself or his son to discover the murderers, has led to a suspicion that the King personally connived at the circumstance; or, that the murderer was too nearly connected with him to be denounced. Whether this was the case or not, it is a fact, that the cruel death of Ostrida so affected the mind of Ethelred, that from that time he could not discharge the duties of royalty, but resigned his regal dignity and dominions to Kenred, his nephew, son of Wulphere: whether sorrow for her loss, or penitence for his own share in the crime, induced this, is unknown.

Kenred was arrived at maturity, and the son of Ostrida was still too

<sup>1</sup> It had the virtue of expelling devils from the bodies of persons possessed.—*Bede.*

<sup>2</sup> Speed, Rapin, Langhornii Chron., Palgrave, Holinshed.



young to govern; so that in his abdication Ethelred consulted the wishes of the discontented nation. He assumed the monastic habit of the Benedictines, and having first taken the vows at Bardney, became abbot of that monastery, which had been patronized by his consort when living, afterwards her place of abode, and where her last mortal remains now reposed.<sup>1</sup>

Ethelred abdicated in 704,<sup>2</sup> the time of his entering the cloister; and eight years after became abbot. He discharged the duties of his station for four years only, at the end of which he died at an advanced age, having survived Queen Ostrida nineteen years. The royal founder and Abbot of Bardney was interred in that monastery, where his tomb was still to be seen in the days of William of Malmesbury. The piety and munificence of Ethelred and Ostrida caused their names to be numbered among the Saxon saints.

The royal donation of a crown temporal in these times was "found wanting," when weighed in the balance with the crown eternal, which prince and peasant alike strove to obtain. In the hope of a reward in heaven, Kenred returned the present of a kingdom to his cousin Ceolred, the son of Ostrida, and making a pilgrimage to Rome, passed the residue of his life there in penance and devotion; he had been accompanied in his devotional expedition by Offa, King of Essex, who had married a sister of Ethelred and Wulphere. Kenred died at Rome, A. D. 711.<sup>3</sup>

Ceolred, after an eight years' reign, died King of Mercia, and was buried in the chapel of Mary, at Litchfield Cathedral, where stood the shrine of St. Chad. He left no children by his Queen Werburga, who, like her namesake, the daughter of Wulphere and Ermenilda, received the honours of canonization. Of the family whence the royal Werburga, wife of Ceolred, sprang, historians leave us in ignorance. When her husband died, Werburga entered a monastery, probably that in Holy Island, where she was residing at the time of her death, which event is placed by the Saxon Chronicle in 782-783, and is given by Hoveden in these words:—"Werburga, formerly Queen of the Mercians, then abbess, ceased to live here, that she might live for ever with Christ, anno 783."

Werburga had arrived at a good old age, in the habitual practice of piety and virtue; her character is given in these words: "Like the holy widow, Anna the prophetess, she never departed from our Lord's temple, serving God night and day, in abstinence and prayer, for the space of sixty-five years. For the latter part of that time she was abbess of the monastery, and showed no less humility in governing others than she had before in obeying."<sup>4</sup> Beautiful, at all times, is Christian humility; but how much more so when viewed amidst the attributes of pomp and power, as in a queen towards her subjects, or an abbess to the flock committed to her charge! Werburga was not a solitary instance; for another Queen, named Richthryda, adorned this period of the Saxon Heptarchy by embracing the desired employments of another life, it being her office "to carry oil with lamps before the great ones of the Lord."

<sup>1</sup> Willis's Abbeys.

<sup>2</sup> Willis says 712, and that Ethelred was abbot only four years.

<sup>3</sup> Holinshed, Pennant.

<sup>4</sup> Brit. Sancta.

## QUENBURGA, QUENSWITHA, AND ALFLEDA.

The daughters of Penda—Penda's warlike propensities—Queen Keniswitha accepts the care of Oswy's son—Quenburga's marriage—Peada and Alfleda—Stipulations—Peada baptized at Carlisle—Penda's opinions—Influence of females in conversion—Quenburga's devotion—Court of Alfred a monastic school—Alfred's death—Quenburga returns to her father's dominions—Retires to Dormund Caistor—The three sisters all become nuns—Penda's death—Death of Peada—His wife, his mother, and his mistress suspected of his murder—Oswy seizes his dominions—Two young princesses take the veil.

“Keneburg in this our sainted front shall stand,  
To Alfred the loved wife, King of Northumberland.”

*Drayton's Poly Olbion.*

QUENBURGA and Quenswitha were sisters: their father Penda, King of Mercia, had a very numerous family by his Queen, who also bore the name of Quenswitha. Four princes, Peada, Wupher, Ethelred, and Merowald, became noted Kings of the Saxon Heptarchy. Mercelin, a fifth, was celebrated for piety, and has been entered on the saintly calendar;<sup>1</sup> while, besides the two daughters already named, whose honourable career has transmitted their names to posterity, may be mentioned their sisters Quendrida, Idaberge, and Walburga, the last of whom wore the crown-matrimonial of Sussex.

The father of this remarkable family maintained his power for thirty years, which he spent in continual wars with his neighbours. His adventurous spirit “hated peace worse than death.” Five Kings of the Anglo-Saxons perished in contending against his arms, besides the renowned Edwin and Oswald. Penda, in his sister Saxburga's cause, turned his arms against Northumberland, and penetrated as far as the capital city of Bamborough, setting fire to every habitation in the line of his march. Oswy, the Northumbrian monarch, warned by the fate of his kingly predecessors, made every effort to conciliate his formidable enemy. He not only sent him the most valuable presents, but delivered over his second son, Egfrid, as a hostage into the care of Queen Keneswitha, wife of Penda. It was on this occasion that a match was proposed, which it was hoped would establish a lasting peace between the two hostile nations. This was the marriage of Alfred, eldest son of Oswy, by Enfleda, the Kentish princess, to Quenburga, daughter of the Mercian King. This tie, which took place shortly after, was very important in its consequences. On the occasion of Quenburga's coming to Northumberland, she was accompanied by her eldest brother Peada, who

<sup>1</sup> Speed, Rapin, Malmesbury, Fabian, Butler.

then beheld and fell in love with Alfleda, half-sister of Alfred, the King's illegitimate daughter, by a lady bearing the same name, and who was sister of Egfrid, and of another Alfred often mistaken for the son of Enfleda, who had married Quenburga.<sup>1</sup>

Peada<sup>2</sup> demanded Alfleda of Oswy for his bride, but Oswy refused to accede to the proposal of the Mercian prince, unless he would become a convert to the faith his daughter professed. The royal husband of his sister Quenburga was a firm believer in Christianity; she was mainly instrumental in persuading Peada to embrace its holy doctrines; and that he did this from a sincere conviction, appears from the answer he made when interrogated on the subject: he remarked, with much warmth, "that no consideration, not even the refusal of Alfleda, should provoke him to return to the worship of Wodin."

Peada was accordingly baptized prior to his union with Alfleda; the ceremony was performed by Bishop Finnan, and all his train received the sacred rite with him. This interesting event was witnessed at Carlisle. This city had arrived at great consequence under the Romans, and though afterwards ravaged by the Picts and Scots, was still, for its ancient splendour, accounted a city. When, in a later period, Egfrid, the brother of Alfleda, reigned in Northumberland, he gave the city to St. Cuthbert; and Bede paid a visit there in 686, at the time St. Cuthbert was bishop of Lindisfarne, and describes the walls, which the townspeople took him to see, and a fountain or well of admirable workmanship, which had been early constructed by the Romans.<sup>3</sup>

Before Peada quitted Mercia, in 653, he had been crowned by his father King of Leicester, so that Alfleda might be considered by her marriage Queen of that portion of the Heptarchy. At this period Mercia was divided into two parts, called North and South Mercia, the river Trent forming the boundary between them; the southern division, which belonged to Peada, was called also the Mediterranean, or Middle Angles, and contained 7000 households. The young Queen was conducted by her husband into his dominions, attended by his train, and by four Christian priests, Cidd, Betti, Adda, and Diuma, whom he engaged to instruct his subjects in the new faith.<sup>4</sup> It had been expected that Penda would oppose his son's conversion, as he was a great enemy to Christianity; but either all religions were alike to him, or he treated the subject with complacency for the sake of a son much beloved; for not only did he suffer, and indeed promote, first the marriage of Quenburga to the pious Alfred, but afterwards the conversion of Peada, and the alliance stipulated as its result to take place with Alfleda. More than this, he admitted Chris-

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<sup>1</sup> The second Alfred, King of Northumberland, was brother of Egfrid, who succeeded Oswy, of whom they were illegitimate children. The first Alfred, who married Quenburga of Mercia, reigned over Deira, but at his death the people of that district revolted in favour of Egfrid. The youth of the second Alfred was passed in exile in Ireland, whence he was afterwards recalled to assume the crowns of Bernicia and Deira.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard, *Biographia Britannica*, Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Britton and Brayley, Holinshed, Rapin, Lingard.

<sup>4</sup> The first three were Angles, the last an Irishman.—*Bede*, lib. iii. c. 21.



tianity among the Mercians, but in doing so forbade that the Pagan rites should be intermixed with those of the Christians, as had occurred in Essex. This fierce King is said to have "especially hated and despised those who, after they had embraced Christianity, lived in a manner unbecoming their profession," as did Eadbald and other converted princes of the Heptarchy, whom he regarded as "despicable wretches who would not obey their God, in whom they believed."<sup>1</sup>

The Northumbrian missionaries were successful in propagating their belief. The Queen herself employed her influence over the heart of her husband in behalf of the Christian faith, and in seconding its apostles in their work among his subjects. Thus it is a most remarkable fact, that Mercia, as well as Kent and Northumberland, the three most considerable kingdoms of the Heptarchy, were indebted for conversion to the influence of the female sex.<sup>2</sup> Alflæda had only to recall to her mind the bright examples of Bertha and Ethelburga to receive encouragement in the glorious task. Peada, her amiable consort, the first Christian King of Mercia, was a prince of superior understanding, worthy of his exalted dignity, and possessed of talents which commanded the esteem and admiration of all who knew him.

The heart of Quenburga, Queen of Deira, like that of Alflæda, was more set upon the kingdom of heaven than on any earthly diadem. She was singularly devout and pious, and her exhortations prevailed with her husband, King Alfred, that they should live together as brother and sister, rather than as husband and wife: in those times such instances of devotion were esteemed the most exalted proof of religion.

Through the influence of the Queen of Deira, the court of Alfred became converted into a kind of monastic school, of regular discipline and Christian perfection, according to the prevalent notion.

Alfred, however, having died during his father's life-time,<sup>3</sup> Quenburga returned to the dominions of Penda, her father. She had resolved to pass the residue of her days in religious seclusion, and selected for her retreat from the world, a town in the confines of Huntingdon and Northampton, called Dormund Caistor. That spot suited her inclination for retirement, but was not the most healthy, being in a moist and fenny situation. Some say that a monastery had already been built there by Prince Wulpher, her brother; but the general opinion is, that Quenburga herself founded the establishment for Christian virgins, over whom she presided as Abbess;<sup>4</sup> and this seems most likely, as the town, since called Caistor only, was changed, at that date, from the name of Dormund Caistor to Kunneburg-ceaster, or the town of Quenburga. Into this holy retreat, the three sisters of the widowed Queen retired, the Princesses Keneswitha, Quendrida, and Idaburga, who were all consecrated at Godmanchester.<sup>5</sup>

Great changes, meanwhile, befell the Christian abbess, Quenburga. Her husband was dead, and she had devoted herself to God. She had now to mourn in solitude for the warfare and loss of her father Penda, his

<sup>1</sup> Rapin, Roger of Wendover.

<sup>2</sup> Hume, Rapin.

<sup>3</sup> Brit. Sancta.

<sup>4</sup> Dugdale, vol. vi., p. 1621.

<sup>5</sup> Butler.



foe being her father-in-law, King Oswy. The particulars of this battle have already been related. Penda died as he had lived, a Pagan, and his death was that of a hero, on the battle-field. Thirty captains were slain fighting on the Mercian side on that eventful day, and those who did escape, of their party, were drowned in their flight, in the river Winwid.<sup>1</sup> Among the prisoners taken on the field of strife were the widowed Queen of Penda, Keneswitha, and Egfrid, her hostage, brother to Queen Alfleda.

These were painful tidings for the ears of the royal sisters of Mercia, to Peada and his consort, and the three sons of the deceased king. They were followed by a yet more tragical event, the sudden and mysterious death of Peada.<sup>2</sup> The catastrophe of his murder occurred during the festival of Easter, but the true author of the deed is unknown. Three persons stand charged with the crime. The amiable Alfleda, his consort, whose irreproachable life renders such a deed most improbable. Oswy's mistress, who was a Pagan, of whom Robert de Swapham, quoted by Speed, remarks, "this blot is taken from the Christian lady, Alfleda, and brands the face of her that most deserveth it."

The third party accused of Peada's death, is his own mother, the captive Queen Keneswitha. This charge is so unlikely to be true, as to need no refutation. Of the three accused parties, Oswy's mistress seems most likely to have been guilty, and perhaps her daughter was made the tool of her intrigues on this occasion: this opinion derives strength from the fact, that on Peada's death, Oswy seized his dominions, and held them, with the rest of Mercia, till driven thence by Wulphere, brother of the deceased monarch. After the death of Peada, the name of Alfleda, his consort, disappears from the Chronicles.

It is worthy of remark, that the children of Penda, so notorious an opponent of Christianity, were all distinguished for their extraordinary piety. All his four sons, who in succession ruled over Mercia, actively supported the new doctrine, and their sisters became famous in the calendar of saints.<sup>3</sup>

St. Keneswitha was very young when she lost her father, and having resolved to consecrate herself to God, she took the veil in the Monastery of Dormund Caistor, over which her sister, the foundress, presided as first Abbess. Her elder sister, Quendrida, assumed the religious habit with her. These two young votaries are described by historians, as being "eminent for holiness."<sup>4</sup> As for their royal protectress and sister, Quen-burga, she was "a mirror of sanctity, so that many virgins of all ranks and degrees resorted to her monastery, to be instructed in the rules and exercises of a religious life; and while the daughters of princes revered her as a mistress, the poor were admitted to regard her as a companion, and both the one and the other honoured her as a parent."

<sup>1</sup> Winwidfield, near Leeds.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed, Rapin, Robert de Swapham, Speed.

<sup>3</sup> Ingulphus.

<sup>4</sup> Palgrave.

## HERESWYTHA, SEXBURGA, ETHELDREDA, ERMENBURGE, AND ERMENILDA.

Religious enthusiasm—Church building—Queen Hereswytha, “the mother of many Saints”—Her husband, King Anna—Etheldreda and Thonbert—She retires to a monastery—Her second marriage to Egfrid—Their establishment—Egfrid’s remonstrance—Etheldreda goes to a convent, accompanied by Bishop Wilfred—Architecture and Church Music patronised by Wilfred—Anger of Egfrid—Their separation: he re-marries—Ermenburge persecutes Wilfred—Anglo-Saxon carriage—Wilfred’s trials—Sexburga’s piety—Her daughter—The Abbess Hildelitha—The Convent of Minstre—Ermenilda’s, and her young daughter Werburga’s, piety—Murder of the young princes, Wulfade and Rufin—Werburga’s profession—The Abbess Etheldreda’s edifying death—St. Audrey’s lace, and St. Etheldred’s chain—Ely Monastery—Sexburga’s happy death—The butterfly shadow—Miracles—St. Werburga, the Patroness of Chester—Ely Cathedral—Antiquities—The stone cross of Etheldreda.

THE distinguishing feature of the seventh century was religious enthusiasm. It was a period when self-negation was looked upon as the prime virtue, and females in high position thought it incumbent upon them to devote their lives to self-sacrifices, of a nature which, in these days, do not carry with them the eminent character of virtue which they were then thought to bestow.

Monkish writers naturally enlarge on the holiness and purity of a life of celibacy, and infinite credit has been given to many persons in those remote ages, whose acts, considered by them worthy, were calculated to cause unhappiness and discontent to others. Of this kind was the conduct of several of the consorts of the Saxon monarchs, who, consenting to become wives, did not comprehend the duties of the state into which they had entered, and adopted the habits of recluses in the midst of a court; disappointing the hopes of the country, which looked to them to become the mothers of princes who should perpetuate the line of succession, and whose example of attachment and tenderness to the husbands they had accepted should afford an example to their female subjects.

Mistaken piety led many royal wives into a perfectly opposite course to what is an évident duty, and much inconvenience, as well as vexation, ensued in the State in consequence. But whatever are our present notions, the ascetic behaviour adopted at this early period of history was looked upon as a proof of every Christian virtue, and was probably a natural reaction from the licentiousness of Paganism.

Unbounded praise is bestowed by most Roman Catholic writers on those Queens who converted their palaces into nunneries, and looked upon their husbands as merely brethren of a community, whose earthly

love it was their duty to repudiate, and with whom it was praiseworthy to live on terms of the strictest severity. Occasionally the partners of these holy and religious ladies shared their enthusiasm, and devoted themselves to the same life; but in some cases it was different, and the whole country was thrown into a ferment in consequence of the domestic troubles ensuing.

To have erected and endowed a church or a monastery is always spoken of by early historians as the most praiseworthy of acts, and almost countless are the edifices raised in the seventh century to prove the zeal of the new converts to the true faith. The Queens of Ercombert, Egfrid, and Wulphere were not the least amongst those pious personages, who strove to gain the approbation of man and the favour of Heaven by expending enormous sums on religious buildings.

Not one of the princes of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy was more eminent for piety than Anna, King of East Anglia, who had sheltered Cenwalch from the indignant wrath of his fierce brother-in-law Penda, King of Mercia; nor was there a more excellent and amiable princess than Hereswytha, his consort, who for her own piety and the holiness of her offspring, has been entitled the "mother of many saints." Of her first husband, to whom she bore a son and a daughter,<sup>1</sup> no account is accurately given: three sons and three daughters were the offspring of her union with King Anna. The sons of Hereswytha were Jurminus, Adulphus, and Erkenwald; her daughters were Ethelburga, Sexburga, Etheldreda, Oslave, and Withburga.

Sexburga, whose education had been carefully attended to (for women at this time were highly instructed), became the wife of Ercombert, King of Kent, who was remarkable both for his zeal in religion and his patriotism. He was first to establish the fast of Lent in his division of the Heptarchy, where he razed the temples of heathenism, and extirpated the idolatrous worship so long prevailing. Queen Sexburga encouraged her husband in all his religious undertakings, sharing in his exertions, and confirming his resolution by her counsel and example. "Thus," says the Chronicle, "while her virtue, humility, and devotion excited the admiration and reverence of the people, her goodness and unbounded charity gained for her more especially the love of the poor. Although she had married in obedience to the will of her parents, she would have preferred the cloister to a palace, a church to matrimony, and the service of Christ to worldly empire."<sup>2</sup>

Etheldreda<sup>3</sup> was the destined wife of Thonbert, an Englishman of

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<sup>1</sup> St. Sethrid, Hereswytha's daughter by the first husband, was honoured by the early English as a saint, though her name is not contained in any calendar. She succeeded St. Fara, abbess and foundress of Faremoutiers, in France, in her high office, and was honoured, on the 6th or 7th of May, as St. Sethrid, or Sessetrudis. — Butler's Lives, Jan. 10 and Dec. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Broniton.

<sup>3</sup> The uncertainty of orthography in former times is well exemplified in the name of Etheldreda. Its abbreviation is Eldrude, a compound of Saxon and British, from "Ell," the reduplicative pronoun, and "drud," "illustrious" or "well-beloved." — Butler.



noble birth. From her infancy she had been distinguished by her humility and devotion, which led her, in conformity with a custom at that time enjoined by the Church, to take upon herself a vow of perpetual celibacy, devoting herself entirely to the service of Christ. This vow she never violated, though she twice entered the connubial state. She was induced to accept Thonbert for her nominal husband, in conformity with the wishes of her parents, and with him she is said to have lived for three years, as a holy sister, in accordance with her early vow. He was Prince of the Southern Girvii, having authority over Rutland, Northampton, and part of Lincolnshire, those districts being ruled by their own princes, who were subject to the Kings of Mercia. To this domain was added the Isle of Ely, upon his marriage with Etheldreda, to whom it was given as a bridal dowry.<sup>1</sup> At the end of two years, Etheldreda's father, King Anna, with his son Jurminius, was slain in battle by Penda, and the death of her husband followed shortly after. Returning into solitude, the young widow could now uninterruptedly devote herself to religious duties, and humble herself before Him who "loveth those whom he chasteneth."

Her mother Hereswyda, to whom she was tenderly attached, and who, on the death of King Anna, had retired to France with her own sister Hilda, and entered the Monastery of Chelles, died at this time.

The famous Monastery of Chelles, five leagues distant from Paris, on the Marne, though founded by Clotilda, Queen of France, was chiefly endowed by St. Bathilde, a Saxon Queen. Hilda had resolved to end her days in that establishment, but the loss of her sister broke the tie which bound her to the spot, and she suffered herself to be prevailed on by St. Aidan to return into Northumberland, where she is afterwards distinguished as the Abbess of Whitby.

The deaths of Thonbert and of Hereswyda occurred in 655, and the year after Adolphus succeeded to the throne of his father Anna, Etheldreda remaining in Ely, occupying herself in "fasting, prayer, vigils, and penance." Vainly, however, did the widowed princess seclude herself from the world. The fame of her beauty and her virtue had spread, and attracted the attention of Egfrid, one of the most powerful Kings of the Saxon Heptarchy, who then governed Northumberland, and he desired to obtain her in marriage. Etheldreda, however, refused to become his wife,

"Though her sister Sexburge moened her tenderly;"

until the Prince urged his suit with such importunity, promising that her vow should be held sacred, that she yielded her consent;

"And at the maryage was great solemnyte,  
Trumphes, honoures, on every side,  
Great cost and royalte."<sup>2</sup>

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This word, however, is written indifferently—which is sufficiently confusing—Etheldrida, Etheldrith, Adelfrida, Adelthrid, Ediltrudis, or Audrey. The name of Etheldreda signifies "noble advice." [Camden.] Hereswytha is indifferently written with a *d* or *th* — the sound being the same.

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Bradshawe.

<sup>2</sup> Bradshawe.



Ely was probably the scene of the nuptial festivity, as King Egfrid came there to seek his bride.<sup>1</sup> Five years had been passed by Etheldreda in widowhood when, by her second espousals to Egfrid, she became Queen of Northumberland.

During twelve years from the date of this union, Etheldreda resided with her consort as his sister, not as his wife; for neither the affection of the husband, the authority of the king, or any other inducement, was of any avail in inducing her to break the vows she had made to Heaven. Egfrid, on the other hand, felt such respect for his wife, and was so much affected by the example of her virtue, that he allowed her full liberty to fast, watch, and pray, and to devote her time to acts of piety and charity, during that space of time; but his own youth, and the great desire of his subjects that he should have heirs, at length led him to make representations, not indeed to Etheldreda herself, whose reproof he feared, but to Bishop Wilfred, who possessed the entire confidence of the Queen, and she was in the habit of consulting him on all occasions. Etheldreda had bestowed on him, with the consent of her husband, Hexham, which she is believed to have obtained as her own bridal dowry from Egfrid, for an episcopal see; and Wilfred built in it a church and monastery, the structure of which surpassed any in England. Italian architects, masons, and glaziers<sup>2</sup> were hired to assist in its erection, and it was furnished with plate and holy vestments, besides containing a large collection of the Lives of the Saints, and a noble ecclesiastical library.<sup>3</sup> Sacred music was first patronized in Northumberland in Etheldreda's time. St. Acca, a subsequent Bishop of Hexham, himself a learned musician and author of many literary productions, especially of a religious nature, retained in his service for twelve years a famous singer named Maban, by whose instructions the use of church music and singing of anthems was revived, and who introduced many Latin hymns before unknown in the northern churches.<sup>4</sup>

Several charitable institutions, founded in different parts of Wilfred's diocese, were encouraged by Queen Etheldreda.

<sup>1</sup> Butler.

<sup>2</sup> The art of making glass was known in Britain before the coming of the Romans, and improved by them. It was lost in the invasion of the Saxons, but afterwards imported among them, A.D. 664, for the ornament of churches and religious edifices, as Bede tells us, though not used till after the Conquest, in private dwellings. Specimens of Saxon glass may be seen in Westminster Abbey, cemented into the tomb of Edward the Confessor: they are small square or diamond-shaped pieces, not more than an inch in length, and lined with gold leaf. Similar ornaments were seen in a tomb discovered in repairing Rochester Cathedral, though of rather a later date.

<sup>3</sup> Lives of the Saints.

<sup>4</sup> Biog. Brit. This Acca was interred in Hexham Church, where one stone cross was placed at his head and another at his feet. When, three hundred years afterwards, his tomb was opened, his burial-clothes were found in a state of entire preservation, and a wooden tablet, of the form of an altar, was discovered, which had been placed on the breast of the deceased prelate. It was joined with silver nails, and bore an inscription. Such was the mode of interment in those days used for a bishop among the Angles.

Bishop Wilfred, appealed to by Egfrid on the subject of Etheldreda's vow, did not feel at liberty to decline the commission intrusted to him of interfering in this matter, and accordingly addressed himself to the Queen on the subject of her husband's wish. Etheldreda now plainly perceived that the only method of enabling her to keep her resolution, was to endeavour to induce Egfrid to live in a state of separation from her; Wilfred represented, accordingly, to the king that it was the desire of his wife to enter into the seclusion of a monastery. The prelate's entreaties and the importunity of Etheldreda herself at last extorted from the King a consent that she should depart from the court of Northumberland, and follow her wish in this respect also. Having succeeded in gaining the consent of the King, Etheldreda took an important step, in which she was advised by Wilfred; she repaired to the Monastery of Coldingham, beyond Berwick, of which Ebba, "the King's aunt," was Abbess, and there professed herself a nun.<sup>2</sup> She received the veil from the hands of Wilfred himself, and on the occasion expressed her joy by remarking "that she never thought herself a Queen till she was professed, and thus solemnly contracted to the King of Heaven."<sup>3</sup>

Etheldreda remained for some time under the protection of the Abbess Ebba; but at the end of a year from the time of her profession, Wilfred informed the royal nun that Egfrid had formed a design, either by persuasion or compulsion, to make her return to his court. To avoid this alternative, Etheldreda quitted the convent and fled to the kingdom of East Anglia, for greater safety. She was accompanied in her journey by two maidens, and the monkish Chronicles inform us that at every place where they rested on their way thither, "our Lord showed them miracles."<sup>4</sup> It is supposed that Ovin, an old and faithful steward of the Queen, attended their flight.

Adulph, who is sometimes called the "natural brother of Etheldreda," received the fugitives; and in due course of time, Etheldreda, assisted by him, erected on her own estate, the Isle of Ely, a double monastery.<sup>5</sup> This edifice was founded in A. D. 672.<sup>6</sup> As soon as it was completed, Etheldreda assumed the government. Wilfred himself attended in person at Ely, to assist at the ceremony of the Queen's election as abbess.

This prelate had, as it is natural to imagine, incurred the severe anger of Egfrid, nor was that anger appeased even after he had taken another wife. The new Queen was Ermenburge, sister-in-law to the King of

<sup>1</sup> Bede, Milton, Lives of the Saints.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Butler.

<sup>4</sup> Lives of the Saints.

<sup>5</sup> Canwod Abbey. — Bradshawe.

<sup>6</sup> To this period may perhaps be ascribed the foundation of a structure by Etheldreda in the locality now known as Ely Place, Holborn. The work of that Queen has long since fallen to decay; but Shakspeare, on the authority of Holinshed, informs us that the Bishop of Ely dwelt at a palace in what is now called Ely Place — which residence was noted by some of our writers for its strawberry gardens, vineyards, and meadows. On the spot where Queen Etheldreda's foundation existed, was erected, in 1820, the antique chapel bearing her name, of which Newcourt, in his "Repertorium Londinense," written in 1700, says, "is, to this day, a very fair, large, old chapel."

Wessex,<sup>1</sup> who, unwilling to encourage so great a power as that possessed by Wilfred in the kingdom, irritated the King still more against him; and her mortification at the freedom of the bishop's strictures on the violence of character, soon led to open hostilities between them.

Ermenburge<sup>2</sup> now employed every means to ruin Wilfred in the King's opinion, and her task was the less difficult as Egfrid was already so much incensed. She gained also an ally in Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was induced to assist her views, owing to misrepresentations, of which he afterwards became aware; for the present, however, he only listened to the grievances brought forward by the Queen, and was prevailed on to depose Wilfred from his dignity, after he had spent ten years in endeavouring to establish the monastery of which he was the support. Richard, Prior of Hexham, speaking of Ermenburge, says: "In her heart Satan stirring up the seeds of hatred against the said bishop, by her tongue incited the King's mind to expel the priest;" and it appears that the Queen was the more displeased, because Hexham, part of Etheldreda's dowry received from Egfrid, had been bestowed on that prelate. It is plain that all parties, Queen as well as bishops, had an interested motive for the disgrace of Wilfred.

Accordingly Theodore parcelled out his great diocese, consecrating Bosa to the see of York, for the Deiri; Eata to that of Lindisfarne, for Bernicia; and Eadhead to the church of Lindissi, or great part of Lincolnshire, which Egfrid had won from Mercia. This great division of Wilfred's bishopric took place A. D. 678. Wilfred on this appealed to the Pope. He raised no clamour, for he dreaded either disturbances or schism, but was sufficiently well acquainted with the canons to perceive the irregularity and nullity of many steps taken against him. He accordingly embarked for Rome, where having pleaded his own cause, he returned to England, and repairing to the presence of Egfrid, handed to him the sealed decrees of the Pope. That prince, having first caused them to be read by the prelates of his own faction, who were at that time present in the apartment, declared that they had been obtained by bribery, and commanded that Wilfred should be committed to prison. The order was obeyed, and during the space of nine months Wilfred was subjected to the most rigorous treatment. It is said, everything but the clothes which he wore was taken from him, and all his adherents were dispersed in different directions. Queen Ermenburge herself took possession of his case of relics, which she hung up in her chamber, and carried about with her in her chariot wherever she went, making an outward display of piety but little in accordance with her conduct.

The following curious account of a lady's carriage exists in an Anglo-Saxon MS. in the Harleian library. It represents the carriage of a lady of rank, of a rather later period than that of Ermenburge: "it has uprights fixed before and behind, with a body, shaped like a hammock, suspended between; the whole, and in particular the spokes of the wheels, are painted with various colours. The lady to whom the gay vehicle belongs, wears on her head a double veil, and has a perforated mantle

<sup>1</sup> Eddius.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard.



over the shoulders; her upper gown, which scarcely descends below the knees, is embellished with a border of needlework edged with beads. The sleeves descend only as far as the elbows, and are of considerable width, in shape resembling those now most fashionable. Beneath is worn an under garment, with long tight sleeves, reaching to the ground, so as almost to cover the feet."<sup>1</sup>

Wilfred's composure of mind is said to have been so great under his reverses, that his guards overheard him singing psalms in his dungeon: a bright light also is said "to have issued from that dark chamber, which alarmed his guards, and Wilfred having performed an extraordinary cure on the sick wife of their governor, that person refused any longer to guard him; so that the King, for safety, removed him to another prison."<sup>2</sup>

At length Ermenburge was seized with a dangerous illness while staying at the Monastery of Ebba. The King's aunt was struck with the belief that her malady was caused by the indignation of Heaven for her conduct towards Wilfred; a notion fostered by the abbess, on whose remonstrances at her injustice to that excellent prelate, Wilfred was set at liberty, his relics restored, and his companions sent back to him, on condition, however, that the bishop should never more set foot within the territories of Egfrid. He accordingly retired from Northumberland, and solicited the protection of Brithwald, nephew to the King of Mercia, who granted to him land, on which he built a monastery. Egfrid's emissaries, however, discovered his retreat, and the Mercian was alarmed by his threats; so that Wilfred, unwilling to endanger his friend's safety, quitted his place of refuge, and fled into Wessex.<sup>3</sup> But Wilfred's trials were not yet over; for Irmenigild, sister of his persecutress, was Queen of Wessex, and, influenced by Ermenburge, so harassed the prelate that he was glad to avail himself of the invitation of Ethelwald, King of Sussex, to reside in his dominions. One prince had remained his firm friend throughout, namely, Alfred, illegitimate brother of Egfrid. When, therefore, in 685, Egfrid was slain, Ermenburge's influence expired with him; as Egfrid had no issue, Alfred became his brother's successor on the throne, and Wilfred was immediately reinstated in all his honours at Hexham, and appointed to the see of York and monastery of Ripon.

For this the prelate was in a great degree indebted to Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, his former persecutor, then arrived at an advanced age, and subject to frequent fits of sickness. The Archbishop sent to Wilfred, and desired him to meet him at London with St. Erkenwald, bishop of that city, brother of Etheldreda. In their interview he confessed all the actions of his past life, and observed, "the greatest remorse I feel is, that I consented with the King to deprive you of your possessions, without any fault committed on your part." He then earnestly entreated that he might be permitted to make all the restitution that was left in his power. Accordingly he wrote letters to King Alfred, to Ethelred, King of Mercia, and to Elfreda, Abbess of Whitby and others, and thus made ample amends to Wilfred for his ancient hostility.

Queen Ermenburge, not long after her husband's death, A. D. 685

<sup>1</sup> Smith and Merrick.

<sup>2</sup> Butler's Lives.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.



assumed the religious habit in the monastery of her sister, at Carlisle, founded A. D. 686.

The Farn island,<sup>1</sup> the largest of the group, and the nearest to the mainland, is celebrated for having been the residence of St. Cuthbert during nine years. "In that spot he devoted himself to prayer and fasting, after having borne the charge of the priorate of Lindisfarne, and thither numbers came to be edified."

The island on which he dwelt is about eleven acres in extent, and the basaltic rocks with which it is bordered rise abruptly, on the south-west side, to a height of about eighty feet above the sea: the north is entirely exposed to the winds and waves. The site of the buildings erected by the holy recluse has been ascertained, consisting of his oratory, cell, hospitium, and fountain; and the chapel, which had fallen into decay, was restored and roofed by Archdeacon Thorpe.

It is recorded that "when the coffin of St. Cuthbert was brought by the monks of Lindisfarne to the spot where the city of Durham is now built, no power could move it thence." The monastery was, therefore, of course, erected there.

Sexburga, after the death of Ercombert, had departed from England and repaired to France, accompanied by her unmarried sister Ethelburga, and her youngest daughter Ercongeca. Her eldest daughter, Ermenilda, had been previously married to Wulphere, King of Mercia. Her sons were Egbert and Lothair, of whom, hereafter, mention will be made.<sup>2</sup>

Sexburga, her daughter and sister, all received the religious veil in France. At this time there were very few conventual establishments in Britain, and it was customary with the Anglo-Saxon princes and nobles to send their children into France to be educated in the monasteries there. The most celebrated of these establishments, which were really schools for education, and noted for resort by the English, were Faremoutiers, Briège, Andelie, and Chelles. Etheldreda, at some period of her life, is said to have resided at Faremoutiers:<sup>3</sup> perhaps it might have been while waiting for the completion of her edifice at Ely.

At the time the royal princesses of England arrived, Hildelitha was Abbess of Faremoutiers. Ethelburga joined her pious flock, but was at a subsequent period recalled to her native country to assume the government of the celebrated Abbey of Barking, which had been built for her reception by her brother Erkenwald, Bishop of London, a princely prelate, whose virtues afterwards caused his relics to be worshipped in a famous shrine dedicated to him in St. Paul's church.

<sup>1</sup> Farne, is a corruption of the Celtic word *fahren*, a recess. Holy Island was called Lindisfarne, from the Lindis, a rivulet which empties itself into the sea from the opposite shore.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale.

<sup>3</sup> St. Fara was the name of the foundress of the Monastery of Faremoutiers, and is supposed to have been the first abbess. Hildelitha, who afterwards presided there, returned to England to assist Ethelburga in the management of Barking Abbey. St. Sethrid, the daughter of Hereswyda, afterwards held the government of Faremoutiers, prior to her union with King Anna. Etheldreda is esteemed third Abbess of Faremoutiers. According to Holinshed, both Sethrid and Ethelburga became Abbesses of Briège. — See *ante*, p. 266, note.

Ercongeca made her profession either in Briège or Chelles; it is not known to which place Sexburga retired, though she seems to have spent the six following years in France. Sexburga, even during her husband's lifetime, had earnestly desired to devote herself exclusively to the service of God, in a state of religious seclusion; and in order that others, at least, might be enabled to attend on the divine service night and day without impediment, she had commenced erecting a nunnery in the isle of Sheppey, on the coast of Kent, having obtained a grant of land for that purpose. Some say that this was given by her son Egbert, who succeeded his father on the throne, but the building appears to have been commenced during the lifetime of Ercombert,<sup>1</sup> though not formed into a community till A. D. 664.<sup>2</sup>

The establishment consisted of seventy-four nuns in all, who were assembled there by the widowed Queen, who had either taken on herself previously the monastic vows and veil, or did so at this time, when in her own person she assumed the government of the monastery.

The ruins of this little edifice, called Minstre, in the isle of Sheppey, have survived the lapse of ages to commemorate their royal foundress. The buildings attached to the monastery were some twenty miles in compass. The original edifice was destroyed by the Danes, but rebuilt in 1130, and consecrated by William, Archbishop of Canterbury, to the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Sexburga: it subsisted in the hands of Benedictine nuns till the dissolution of abbeys, at which time the "building of Minstre<sup>3</sup> was valued at the annual sum of 129*l.* 7*s.* 10½*d.*; some part of it is now converted into a parish church, in which are divers funeral monuments, supposed to have been removed out of the adjoining chapel, some of which make a show of wondrous great antiquity."

It is said, that a desire still further to seclude herself from the world afterwards induced Sexburga to seek the solitude of Ely, and to this may be added a wish to dwell under the same roof as Etheldreda, her much-loved sister, who had obtained even then an extraordinary reputation for sanctity. It would appear that this arrangement was made by Sexburga at the period of Wulphere's death, who had succeeded Penda on the throne of Mercia, and who, during the life-time of Ercombert, had espoused her daughter Ermenilda,<sup>4</sup> Princess-Royal of the house of Kent.

Wulphere had heard of the virtues and piety of Sexburga's daughter with admiration,<sup>5</sup> and professing himself a Christian, undertook, at the time of his union with her, to extirpate the remnants of paganism from

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale says the edifice was completed in 675. Weever gives as the date 710 (an obvious error). Dugdale numbers the nuns at seventy-seven.

<sup>2</sup> Weever.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> She (Ermenilda) was heiress-apparent to the dignity of her father's kingdom. — Bromton.

During her government of the Monastery of Minster, Sexburga's mind had to sustain a severe shock in the criminal conduct of her son, King Egbert, who was under the necessity of paying the wergild, or fine, imposed on a murderer by the Saxon laws.

<sup>5</sup> William of Malmesbury, Butler.

Mercia,<sup>1</sup> where the Christian faith had been already introduced by his deceased brother Peada. Worldly motives delayed the performance of this promise, and "the humble and patient" Ermenilda strove in the interval to soften the fierce temper of her warlike husband. She educated her family in the pure principles of the Christian faith, and daily performed with her only daughter Werburga, the whole of the church service. "This young princess, early distinguished for surpassing piety, was wont to spend many hours daily on her knees in private prayer; she also observed with diligence the fasts enjoined by the religion she professed."

The sons of Ermenilda were Wulphade, Rufin, and Kenred, who emulated their mother's example of virtue and goodness. These Princes were taught in the faith of Christ by St. Chad, who also baptized them. This prelate was Bishop of Litchfield, and had a cell or hermitage in a forest, to which the young Princes were at times accustomed to resort for instruction. The ill-fated youths were, however, destined to come to an untimely end. The circumstances which led to their sad fate were these: Werbode was a knight of Wulphere's court, very powerful, and his influence was great over the mind of Wulphere, to whom he had rendered great services in arms; so that he readily obtained his promise to give him the beautiful Princess Werburga, his daughter, provided her own consent could be obtained. The news of Wulphere's promise much grieved the Queen and her sons, who all confirmed Werburga in her refusal of his suit, more particularly Ermenilda; for Werbode was a pagan, and had induced Wulphere to waver in his intentions regarding the true faith, and at length to renounce it and follow the worship of idols. When the knight found that these young Princes stood in his way to Werburga's favour, he resolved on their death. An opportunity soon offered. He discovered that the royal youths visited St. Chad<sup>2</sup> at times, under pretence of hunting; and contrived that Wulphere should be stationed in a place where he could see his sons pass on one of these occasions, having previously informed him of their secret religious object. The King's passion at beholding them on such a mission was so furious, that he gave an order for their execution; but no sooner was the cruel deed perpetrated, than he was filled with remorse and penitence, and though too late to redeem the loss of his children, threw himself on the pity and devotion of the Queen and St. Chad, and having entered into commune with himself, became a convert to the Christian doctrine, abo-

<sup>1</sup> "There still remained, in the kingdom of Mercia, an excessive and inveterate Pagan barbarism. But Queen Ermenilda, the handmaid of God, having been instructed by her parents in the apostolic alphabet of the first teacher, St. Augustine, by her sweetness, by her soothing exhortations, by her manners and benefits, softened their untamed dispositions, and exhorted them to the sweet yoke of Christ and the rewards of everlasting blessedness; while the perverse and most rebellious she repressed by her power: nor did she rest until she extirpated the idols and demoniacal rites, and filled the kingdom of the Mercians with churches and priests." — Bromton's Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> "Chad travelled about, not on horseback, but, after the manner of the Apostles, on foot, to preach the Gospel in towns, the open country, cottages, villages, and castles." — *Bede*.



lished heathenism in Mercia, and by his endeavors and example, propagated the Christian faith. The bodies of Wulfade and Rufin were placed by the Queen in a sepulchre of stone, and over the spot where they were interred this afflicted mother and her penitent husband founded the Priory of Stone.<sup>1</sup> Wulphere afterwards founded Peterborough Cathedral.

The beautiful Werburga had resolved to devote her life to the service of God, and had refused on that account many suitors for her hand, amongst whom was the Prince of Wessex, who waited upon her with rich presents, to receive the same answer as other aspirants.

Upon the change which took place in the religious views of the King, Werburga no longer dreaded his resentment, and ventured to disclose to her father her intention of embracing the religious profession. To this Wulphere was averse, and testified much grief; but so earnest were the supplications of the Princess, that he at length yielded to her wish.

“Wulphere, in person, conducted his beloved child to Ely in great state, accompanied by his whole court. On their arrival there, they were met at the gate of the monastery by the royal abbess, St. Etheldreda, with the whole of her religious family in procession, singing holy hymns. Werburga, falling on her knees, then begged to be admitted as a penitent. She obtained her request, and *Te Deum* was sung, after which she went through the usual trials with great humility and patience, exchanging with joy her rich coronet, purple silks, and gold, for a poor veil and a coarse habit, and resigned herself into the hands of her superior, to live only to Christ. King Wulphere, his three brothers, and Egbert or Egbright, the Kentish King, Adulph, King of East Anglia, and the great lords of those respective states, were all present at the solemn ceremony, being entertained by the Mercian King with a truly regal magnificence.”<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile Etheldreda, as Abbess of Ely, afforded the holy sisterhood over whom she presided, a constant example of Christian perfection. She was very strict in the duties of her religion, eating only once a day, except on great festivals or in times of sickness. “She would rarely wash in a hot bath, unless just before any of the great festivals, as Easter, Whitsuntide, and the Epiphany; and then she did it last of all, after having, with the assistance of those about her, first washed the other servants of God then present.”<sup>3</sup> She was in the habit of wearing woollen clothes, never making use of linen; and it was her custom never to return to bed after matins, which were sung at midnight, but to continue in the church at her devotions until morning. She seems to have rejoiced in pains and humiliations. The physician, Cynefrid, who attended her in her last illness, and was present at her death, relates that she had a very great swelling under her jaw, which he was ordered to lay open. This operation performed, she was more easy for two days, so that many thought she might recover. At the time she had suffered most pain, she had been much pleased with that sort of distemper, and said: “I know that I deservedly bear the weight of my sickness on my neck; for I remember,

<sup>1</sup> In Staffordshire.—Stowe, Leycester, Butler.

<sup>2</sup> Butler.

<sup>3</sup> Bede.



when I was very young, I bore there the needless weight of jewels; and therefore I believe the Divine Goodness would have me endure the pain in my neck, that I may be absolved from the guilt of my needless levity, having now, instead of gold and precious stones, a red swelling and burning on my neck." The third day after the incision made by her physician, "the former pains returning, she was soon snatched out of the world, and exchanged all pain and death for everlasting life and health."<sup>1</sup>

Etheldreda had fulfilled her duties as abbess for seven years, and she was deeply mourned by her little flock, who were sincerely attached to her for her many virtues and goodness.<sup>2</sup> The 23d of June, the anniversary of her death, which took place A. D. 679, has ever since been esteemed her festival day, in which the honours of a saint are accorded to her, and her name may still be seen in English prayer-books as St. Audry. "At a fair held on the causey, in the isle of Ely, which is called St. Audry, much ordinary but showy lace was usually sold, whence St. Audry's lace became quite proverbial, and passed into the corruption of *Taudry*, a word used to denote not lace only, but any other part of the female costume which was gaudy in appearance."<sup>3</sup> A certain chain also, made of fine small silk, bears the name of St. Etheldred's Chain, perhaps in allusion to the necklaces worn by the Queen, when a child, at the East Anglian court. The Saxon women had several ornaments for the arms and neck, similar to that ascribed to Etheldreda, studded with brilliants, collars, earrings, and bracelets; these a mother was permitted by law, at her death, to leave to her daughter; and by the same legal authority had the right of conveying to her son, her land, slaves and money.

Sexburga, after her sister's death,<sup>4</sup> presided as Abbess of Ely for twenty years, with great advantage to the convent and neighbourhood. In her time the structure of that venerable building, of which the ruins alone at present afford a noble specimen of Saxon architecture, was completed. As soon as the building was in a fit condition, Sexburga removed the holy remains of the Abbess into it. By the particular desire of the Abbess-Queen, her body had been placed in a coffin of wood; from this her humility is plainly to be discovered, for persons of consequence in her days alone were interred in stone coffins. Queen Sexburga, her sister, performed the interesting task of translating her relics, in 694, in the sixteenth year of her own government at Ely. Bromton, in his Chronicle, tells us that St. Sexburga, "inflamed by a divine zeal, prepared to have her venerable bones transferred to the church; and not having a stone suitable for concealing so heavenly a treasure, of her kindness appointed certain persons to seek a stone of the kind, and having found one, to bring it by ship to the Monastery of Ely; for the isle of

<sup>1</sup> Bede.<sup>2</sup> Fuller's Church History of Britain.<sup>3</sup> Clavis Calendaria.<sup>4</sup> Drayton writes thus of her:—

"Sexburg, some time queen to Ercombert of Kent,  
Tho' Ina's loved child, and Audrey's sister known,  
Which Ely in those days did for her Abbess own."

*Poly Olbion.*

Ely is, by the nature of the place, entirely surrounded by waters and marshes, whence it is destitute of stones of the sort.<sup>1</sup> They applied to a small town at no great distance, named Grantchester,<sup>2</sup> which was at that time much reduced, and but scantily inhabited; by the well of which they found, as it were prepared by Providence, a stone exactly suited for the sepulchre, wherein, afterwards, a certain grace of the Divine operation was very remarkable, since it appeared that the quantity of the stone thus providentially found was, as if purposely, exactly that required by the dimension of the virgin's body. They found, also, a lid very like a sarcophagus, likewise of the appearance of marble, and of the proper size and evenness, and without any incongruity or dissimilarity of the parts."

Having fulfilled this purpose, they returned without meeting any obstacle. "Whereon Sexburga, rejoicing in the benefit of the divine gift, blessed God, who doeth wonderful things. Now when the day determined upon for transferring the body of the holy virgin from a wooden coffin to the stone mausoleum arrived, on opening the previous coffin, the venerable body was found entire, without any sign of corruption, as though it had been recently buried on the same day. The blessed Wilfred, Archbishop of York, was present at this spectacle. There was also, for the greater evidence and certainty of the truth, the aforesaid physician, Kinefrid, who had been present at her death, and had opened the tumour of which she died. He, recollecting the wound which he had formerly made on her body, approaching and carefully examining it, recognised it to be the same, wondering at the marvellously curative power of God on the dead; for there remained of the scar only the slightest mark, the size of a thread, and that becomingly surrounded and concealed with what might be *the shadow of a butterfly*. The brethren stood on one side, and the sisters on the other, blessing God with hymns and praises; while St. Sexburga entered with a few, religiously and devoutly to wash the remains of her sister, and after a short space called out from within: 'Glory be to the name of the most high God.' And that what was done might be with the approbation and in the presence of witnesses, she summoned certain who were more worthy of participating in so great secrets, who, on the removal of the pall and the exposure of the countenance, beheld the body of the virgin undecomposed, and more like one sleeping than dead. At length, having carefully wrapped the body in precious vestments suitable to preserve so great a treasure, with a great and manifold chorus of exultation, they carry it to the church, and place it in a new sarcophagus with honour."<sup>3</sup>

Many miracles are said to have been wrought afterwards, by the de-

<sup>1</sup> There were no quarries in Ely, but the brethren were sent by Sexburga into Cambridgeshire, to procure a stone coffin, which they were ordered to fashion with their own hands. The stone they discovered was found to fit exactly the size of the virgin abbess' body, having in it a hollow place, equally adapted to the size of the head. The coffin found for Etheldreda was a relic of ancient Roman art: it was a white marble coffin, most beautifully wrought.—*Polwhele Bede*

<sup>2</sup> Near Cambridge.

<sup>3</sup> Chron. Bromton, Reg. Northumb., Bede.

vout application of the relics of St. Etheldreda, and of the linen cloths taken off her coffin.<sup>1</sup>

The venerable Bede has written a Latin poem<sup>2</sup> on the discovery of the relics of St. Etheldreda, which is a curious specimen of the literary composition of the times in which he lived.

It is not quite certain whether Ermenilda retired to Sheppey during the life of Wulphere, and took her mother's government of the monastery there; or whether she deferred entering on a religious life till the death of her consort, which took place in 675. Wulphere was interred at Litchfield,<sup>3</sup> and as his only surviving son, Kenred, was still too young to govern, he left the crown to his own brother Ethelred.

One of our early chroniclers writes thus of the royal widow: "Upon the famous King Wulphure, therefore, after a reign of seventeen years, passing to the eternal kingdom, although his pious wife Ermenilda bewailed her social calamity, nevertheless, with her whole soul wounded in love, she exulted in the liberty of Christ. She forthwith betook herself to the most excellent Monastery of Ely, where her parent Sexburga, daughter of Anna, King of the East Angles, and sister of St. Etheldred, among bands of virgins, was shining as the moon among stars, and where her daughter Werberga humbly served God in virgin integrity. Here, therefore, this Ermenilda laid aside all earthly hope and regal ornaments, and put on the yoke and armour of Christ, with the religious habit of the monastics." As Abbess of the Monastery, after Sexburga's death, Drayton writes of her thus:—

"King Wulphere's widowed pheere, Queen Ermineld, whose life  
At Ely is renowned;"

while Bradshawe, in even more courtly language, styles her "a noble Margaryte of high magnificence," and a "rose of paradise full of pre-eminence."<sup>4</sup>

Sexburga departed this life on the 6th of July, 699, at an advanced age. Her remains were deposited near those of her sister, in the Cathedral Church of Ely,<sup>5</sup> though some have thought her interment took place at Canterbury, where her husband, King Ercombert, lies entombed.

Ermenilda was third Abbess of Ely, but could not have become so till twenty-four years after her husband Wulphere's death, when she must have been very aged. This venerable Princess is compared, by Drayton, to her cousin Ermenburga, wife of Merowald, Wulphere's brother, in the following stanzas:—

"Two holy Mercian queens so widowed, saints became;  
For sanctity much like, not much unlike in name."

Ermenilda passed to the heavenly kingdom in the month of February, A. D. —, <sup>6</sup> when her remains were interred with those of her mother

<sup>1</sup> Butler. Bede relates this account in the words of Kinefrid, the physician.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. Hist., lib. iv., c. 20.

<sup>3</sup> The word "Litchfield" means, in the Saxon, "Field of the Dead."—*Dr. Johnson*.

<sup>4</sup> Life of St. Wereburga.

<sup>5</sup> Millar.

<sup>6</sup> February 13th, on which day, after death, she was honoured among the English female saints.



and aunt, and, as Bromton expressed it, "having been tossed, she rested in the Lord."

Werbunga, her successor, the fourth Abbess of Ely, was induced by the persuasions of her uncle, King Ethelred of Mercia, to quit that establishment for the purpose of undertaking the general charge of the religious foundations throughout Mercia, in which he desired to establish a strictly monastic discipline. Through the liberality of Ethelred, the Abbess Werbunga founded several monasteries: those of Trentham and Hanbury, in Staffordshire, and another at Weedon, a royal palace of Northamptonshire.<sup>1</sup> She herself resided at Hearburg, near Stamford, or at Croyland. At the time she died, Werbunga was at Trentham; but by her own express wish, her remains were conveyed to Hanbury for interment. The author of her Life assures us that her relics were venerated at Croyland till the ninth century, when they were removed to Leicester.

In 708, nine years after the death of Werbunga, her body was taken up, in presence of King Ceolred, his council, and many bishops, when it was found incorrupt and entire, and placed in a costly shrine. In the reign of King Alfred, the shrine of St. Werbunga, for fear of the Danes, was carried to West Chester; and the valiant Ethelred, Earl of Mercia, who had married the daughter of that monarch, built and endowed with secular canonries a stately church, as repository for these holy relics, which afterwards became the cathedral. The body of the saint fell to dust, soon after its translation to West Chester.

St. Werbunga is considered the especial patroness of the city of Chester: and Malmesbury tells us that "the praises and miracles of these two women (Ermenilda and Werbunga), and particularly of the younger, are there extolled and had in veneration; and though they are favourable to all petitions without delay, yet they are more especially kind and assistant to the supplications of women and youth." He speaks of a circumstance which occurred in his own time. "This St. Werbunga lies at Chester, in the monastery of that city, which Hugo, Earl of Chester, ejecting a few canons, who resided there in a mean and irregular manner, has recently erected."

The relics of Werbunga being scattered in the reign of Henry VIII., her shrine was converted into the episcopal throne in the same church, and remains in that condition to this day, being "one of the most remarkable monuments in the county of Cheshire, and a rich specimen of Gothic architecture in the early part of the fourteenth century. This monument itself is composed of stone, ten feet high, embellished with thirty curious pieces of antique images of Kings of Mercia, and other princes related to this saint, the names of whom were inscribed upon scrolls held in their hands. These figures, having been much mutilated, either at the Reformation or during the civil war, were restored, but in a bungling manner, about the year 1708."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Weedon, once the royal site of Wulphere's palace, was afterwards converted into a nunnery, at the entreaty of Werbunga, who presided over it. The Danes destroyed the edifice; but Werbunga's memory was preserved by a fair chapel there, dedicated to her sainted memory.—*Green's Worcester, Pennant.*

<sup>2</sup> Lysons's *Mag. Britannia*; Willis's *Abbeys*; Butler.



Some further account is here necessary of the Cathedral Church of Ely. Many abbesses in succession followed Werburga in the establishment there, whose names, however, are not on record till A. D. 870, when the monastery was ravaged by the Danes, and shortly after occupied by a college of secular priests. In the reign of King Edgar, the Abbey was refounded by Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, and the structure appropriated to the use of monks only of the Benedictine order, though the dedication was made in the name of "the Blessed Virgin and St. Audry."<sup>1</sup>

The following is one of the narratives of the monks respecting the relics of their holy foundress: On a former occasion, the corpse of Etheldreda was seen through a hole which the Danes broke in her coffin: a priest, more forward than the rest, prying too busily, and endeavouring to pull the envelope out by a cleft stick, the saint drew back the drapery so hastily, that she tript up his heels, and gave him such a fall as he never recovered, nor his senses, afterwards. Bishop Athelwold stopt up the hole, and substituted monks for the priests. Abbot Brithnoth transferred hither the body of Withburga, the foundress' sister; and when, afterwards, in the time of Abbot Richard, some doubts were entertained about the incorruptibility of the foundress, nobody presumed to examine her body, but they contented themselves with uncovering that of her sister, who was found to be in such good preservation, that she seemed more like a person asleep than dead: a silk cushion lay under her head; her veil and vestments all seemed as good as new, her complexion clear and rosy, her teeth white, and her lips somewhat shrunk.<sup>2</sup>

In 974, when the Monastery of East Dereham, in Norfolk, which King Anna had founded for his daughter Withburga, was destroyed by the Danes, the remains of that princess were translated to Ely, and interred with those of her sisters, Sexburga and Etheldreda. The regal remains of the three ladies, and of Ermenilda, were afterwards removed into the new church of Ely by Abbot Richard,—a solemn and imposing ceremony. Edgar Atheling, and some of the English nobles, having previously defended the isle of Ely against William the Conqueror, that warlike prince paid a visit to the convent, and made an offering at the altar of St. Etheldreda,<sup>3</sup> which is dedicated to St. Peter and St. Etheldreda.

The foundation of the present Cathedral Church of Ely was laid in the reign of Henry the First, son of William; and history, which gives us the accurate date of each portion of this interesting structure, assigns the latest part of the building to the year 1534. The removal of the choir, which took place in 1770, was a very great improvement. The original choir contained the relics and shrines of St. Etheldreda, Sexburga, Ermenilda, and Withburga; it was bounded by a stone screen, and niches still remain in the columns to mark the place whence it was removed. It is said that Bishop Mawson had agreed with an artist to fill the window of the choir with modern stained glass. The middle light of the five was

<sup>1</sup> Millar's Cathedral of Ely.

<sup>2</sup> Gough's Sepulchral Monuments, from Malmesbury de Gestis.

<sup>3</sup> Dugdale.

to have contained a whole-length figure of St. Etheldreda, and below it the royal arms: the others were likewise to have had their embellishments. This agreement was made not long before Bishop Mawson's death. He had advanced a considerable sum of money, and sufficiently provided by his will for the rest. The artist, however, was unable to fulfil his contract; a part had, however, been accomplished, and was put up. The heads of St. Paul and St. Etheldreda were completed, which are in two windows in a room at the Deanery.

Later improvements, even in our own times, have been made in this noble edifice. A magnificent painted window was presented to it by the Rev. Bowyer Sparke, one of the canons of the church. It occupies the south-east angle of the lantern, and is of noble dimensions, being forty feet in height. It is designed to commemorate the foundress, by representations of her marriage, and of her consecration as abbess; whilst the four great lights of the window contain, under gorgeous canopies, the figures of Etheldreda as Queen, her father Anna, King of the East Angles, her first husband Thonbert, King of the Girvii, and her second husband Egfrid, King of Northumberland: in the second row, she appears as Lady Abbess of Ely, with Wilfred, Archbishop of York, by whom she was consecrated, and her successors in the government of the monastery, Sexburga and Ermenilda. This great and beautiful work was completed by Mr. William Wailes, of Newcastle, in little more than three months, at a cost of 600*l*.<sup>1</sup>

The lover of English antiquities will linger with delight, to trace, in "that beautiful part of the building called the 'Octagon,' several of the most important historical passages in the life of the pious Etheldreda. These events are depicted upon small clusters of very slender columns, which connect the arches of this part of the building. Beginning at the right side of the north-west arch, the first of these represents her reluctant marriage with Egfrid; the second, her taking the veil in the Monastery of Coldingham; the third, her pilgrim's staff taking root while she slept by the way, and bearing leaves and shoots; the fourth, her preservation, with her attendant virgins, on a rock surrounded by a miraculous inundation, when the King pursued her with his knights, to carry her off from her monastery; the fifth, her instalment as Abbess

<sup>1</sup> Millar's Cathedral of Ely.

"The same liberal benefactor [Mr. William Wailes] proposes to present another painted window, by the same artist, to the south transept, and the church is likewise indebted to him for originating, by a noble gift, the restoration of the south-west transept, which has added so greatly to the beauty of the cathedral. The design for the eight great windows at the east end of the choir, for filling which with painted glass, the late Bishop Sparke left £1500, is nearly completed. Mr. A. B. Hope has undertaken to restore one of the pinnacles of the east end of the church; Lady Mildred Hope to restore the beautiful cross in the eastern gable, and the crocketing which leads up to it; and Mr. H. R. Evans, who has been so long and so honourably connected with the chapter, as steward of the manors, &c., has undertaken to defray the expense of opening and restoring the great lantern of the western tower, which is now concealed by a plaster vault to the floor of the bell-chamber, and of thus bringing into view the most beautiful system of Norman arcading which is to be found in any cathedral in this kingdom."

--*Bury Paper.*

of Ely; the sixth, her death and burial; the seventh, a legendary tale of one Brithstan, delivered from bonds by her merits, after she was canonized; the eighth, the translation of her body.

"There yet exists in Ely Cathedral, a relic of very great antiquity; it is the lower part of a stone cross with its square pedestal, found many years ago at Haddenham, in the isle of Ely, and placed by Mr. Bentham, historian of the building, in the west end of the southern aisle, under an arch in the wall. The inscription on the pedestal is very legible.

"This cross was erected to the memory of Ovin, the steward and minister of Queen Etheldreda, a monk of great merit, who had accompanied her from the province of the East Angles; and the cross itself is supposed to be a work of the latter end of the seventh, or the very beginning of the eighth century."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Description of Ely Cathedral; Brit. Sancta.

## DOMNEVA.

Lady Eva—Marriage with the son of Penda—The Queen takes the veil in her husband Merowald's life—She founds the Abbey of Minstre, to atone for the murder of her brothers by Egbert—“The Deer's course”—Pious *ruse*—Fate of Thunor the murderer—The humility of Mildred—Leobgitha's verses—Gold and silver ink—The Abbess Eadburga—The letters of St. Boniface to the pious Abbess—The Danes—Mildgitha retires to Estrey—Estrey Court—The sepulchres of the murdered princes there—Mildburga and her father—Their tombs in the Abbey of Wenlock.

DOMPNEVA, or Domneva, appears to be a Roman abbreviation of Lady Eva, or Domina Eva,<sup>1</sup> of which an instance occurs in the name of Julia Domna, wife of Severus. Ermenburga, Eva, or Dompneva, are used indiscriminately for the Queen of Merowald, son of Penda, in our histories: as there is another Ermenburga, Queen of Egfrid, this abbreviation is adopted to distinguish her from others. Ermenred Clito, King of Kent, had by his wife Oslave, daughter of King Anna, another daughter besides Dompneva, who was called likewise Ermenburga,<sup>2</sup> and one called Eormengitha, both of whom became nuns: his sons were called Ethelred and Ethelbright.<sup>3</sup>

Merowald, who was destined to marry Domneva, was King of Herefordshire, or the West Hecanas,<sup>4</sup> over which he had reigned three years. Both this princess and her cousin Ermenilda seem to have been given by their parents in marriage to the Mercian princes, sons of Penda, in the hope of securing a friendship between that royal house and the East Anglian.

At this period the kingdom of Kent had arrived at the highest pinnacle of greatness: the glorious Ethelbert and his amiable consort had transmitted their virtues to their descendants. The alliance of the royal family of Kent was sought with avidity by the other princes of the Heptarchy. It has been seen that the Princess Enfleda had married Oswy of Northumberland, and Etheldreda, the sister of Sexburga and Oslave, became the wife of Egfrid. Domneva and Ermenilda united the kingdoms of East Anglia, Kent, and Mercia. These matrimonial alliances are, in fact, a key by which alone the history of the Saxon Heptarchy can be properly understood.

In spite, however, of her marriage, and, it is said, by the consent of

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<sup>1</sup> Written indiscriminately, Dumnona, Dompnena, Dormenilda, and Dormen-gylda.

<sup>2</sup> Ebba or Eaba, Eva or Gaffe, as the name is spelt indifferently in the same Saxon manuscript; it is sometimes written Eadburg, Idaburga, and Elburg; St. Ebba is also at times converted into St. Tabbs.—*Buller*.

<sup>3</sup> Speed, Rapin.

<sup>4</sup> Lappenberg's Anglo-Saxons.



her husband, Queen Domneva assumed the religious veil :<sup>1</sup> it appears that she became Abbess of Minstre, in Thanet, about the year 670, King Merowald being yet upon the throne. The circumstances which occasioned the erection of this famous monastery are remarkable; and as Domneva was herself the foundress and first abbess, they belong especially to her history.

The two brothers of Queen Domneva had been committed by their dying father, Ermenred, to the care of their uncle Ercombert, King of Kent, who, as long as he lived, fulfilled the sacred trust reposed in him with the honour which might have been expected from so excellent a prince; but when he died, his power, and with it the guardianship of the young Ethelred and Ethelbert, who were still in their minority, devolved on his son Egbert, who regarded these princes, his cousins, as dangerous rivals to his power. He is accused of having employed a Thane, named Thunor, to put the orphans to death;<sup>2</sup> and to prevent discovery of the crime, directed that their bodies should be interred beneath the royal throne in the palace of Estry, in Thanet, the place where they were usually residing under his protection. Heaven, however, would not permit such a crime to escape detection, nor suffer Egbert to pursue in security his guilty career. It is related that a miraculous light, falling on the spot where the bodies of the ill-fated brothers had been deposited by their murderer, revealed their holy relics; and the alarmed monarch was induced, by the united representations of St. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, and St. Adrian, Abbot of St. Augustine's, whose councils were seconded by the clamours of the people, to send into Mercia to seek pardon of Domneva, Queen of Merowald, the sister of his victims, for the heinous crime he either perpetrated or permitted, and to offer to indemnify her for their loss by the usual Weregild, or compensation for murder.<sup>3</sup>

The custom of paying a blood-fine, called Weregild or Manbôt, did not belong solely to the Saxons. Compositions for murder existed among the Jews, and also the Greeks, as is apparent from Nestor's speech to Achilles, in the Iliad; and even till a recent period among the natives of Ireland the same custom prevailed, the price of a man's head being termed by them his *eric*.<sup>4</sup> Spencer, in his "View of the State of Ireland," writes thus of these cases of composition for murder: "The Brehon, that is, their judge, will compound between the murderer and the friends of the party murdered which prosecute the action, that the malefactor shall give to them, or to the child or wife of him that is slain, a recompense, which they call an Eriach; by which vile law of theirs many murders amongst them are made up and smothered. And this judge being, as he is called, the Lord's Brehon, adjudgeth, for the most part, a better share unto his lord, or the head of that sept (or family), and also unto himself for his judgment, a greater portion, than unto the plaintiffs or parties grieved."

On the arrival of Queen Domneva in Kent, Egbert appeared before her in a very sorrowful manner, imploring her pardon, and laying before

<sup>1</sup> Brit. Sancta.

<sup>2</sup> Sax. Chron., Sim. Dunelm.

<sup>3</sup> Butler.

<sup>4</sup> Sir John Davies.

her a great many rich presents. The Queen generously pardoned her royal cousin, but declined accepting any of his offerings: her request to him was, that he would grant her a place "in Tenet," where she might build a monastery in memory of her two brothers, with a competent maintenance, in which she might, with the virgins devoted to God and obliged to her, pray to the Lord to pardon and forgive the King for their murder. Egbert assenting, asked the Queen "how much land she desired to have?" who replied, "only as much as my deer can run over at one course." This being accorded, the animal was let loose at a place called Westgate, in presence of the King, and many of his nobles and people, who all crowded towards the spot where the deer was led in expectation of the event. Among the spectators was Thunor, the King's agent, and the real murderer of the Princes, who cried out that Domneva was a witch, and the King a fool for suffering so noble and fruitful a soil to be taken from him by the decision of a brute. Whilst the King and others around him were diverted with seeing the deer run, "this man endeavoured to put her by, with riding across and meeting her." While thus endeavouring to defeat the pious object of Domneva, the wrath of God fell on him; for, as some say, "the earth opened and swallowed him," or, as we may with greater credibility receive it, "a fall from his horse" occasioned his death; the spot being ever after called "Thunor's Leap," while the place where he was buried yet bears the name of this wretched man. At the sight of the signal judgment which had fallen on Thunor, the King is said to have "very much feared and trembled."<sup>1</sup>

Thunor's Leap was, according to Lewis, the old chalk-pit, which he supposes to have been first sunk when the Abbey and Church of Minstre were built, the bottom of which, in process of time, became overgrown with grass, when the crafty monks invented this fable to frighten the poor people of the neighbourhood. Immediately adjoining this spot formerly stood a beacon, it being some of the highest land in that locality, and it was here that King Egbert had taken up his position, in order that he might be able to see the deer run almost all the way.<sup>2</sup> "The Deer's Course," as it is called by the monks, was nothing more than a lynch or balk, east up as a boundary, to divide the two capital manors of Minstre and Monkton, in the island, and very probably existed even before the former was granted to Domneva.

"The tame deer of the Queen was to obtain for her royal mistress as much land as it could run over at a breath; the favourite animal having finished her course, from one side of the island to the other, and run over in length and breadth forty-eight plough lands (or ten thousand acres), followed the Lady Domneva, while the King, on his part, returned thanks to Christ Jesus, and surrendered to his illustrious cousin the whole tract of land which the deer had run over; St. Theodore, the devout Adrian, and others who were present, hallowing the gift with their blessing."<sup>3</sup> This donation Egbert afterwards confirmed to the ecclesiastical posterity of Domneva by charters, recorded in the book of St. Augustine's,<sup>4</sup> to the infringers of which he added a frightful curse.

<sup>1</sup> Chron. of Thorne.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis.

<sup>3</sup> Thorne, Weever.

<sup>4</sup> Weever had himself seen these charters, as he assures us in his work

Domneva accordingly founded her new minster, dedicating it to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to the name and honour of her murdered brethren.<sup>1</sup> A difference of opinion exists as to the exact date of the foundation, some saying it was commenced in 664 and completed in 670, others that it was commenced only at the latter year.<sup>2</sup> It has again been doubted whether Queen Domneva herself ever ruled the establishment. Drayton says she passed the residue of her days—

“Immonaster’d in Kent, where first she breathed the air;”

yet we afterwards trace her as president of another religious community in Mercia. It is, however, highly probable that on the completion of the structure, Domneva superintended it until the arrival of her daughter, St. Mildred, who had been sent to France, to the Monastery of Chelles, for her education, that she might be fitly prepared to govern the edifice of her mother’s foundation.<sup>3</sup> All things being made ready for her, Mildred was sent for, as the person most fit for the situation of abbess; and on her arrival the Mercian Princess was consecrated to that holy office by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, having previously taken the veil at the Monastery of Chelles. Seventy young women at the same time received the nun’s veil, to form a community for their royal mistress, having been selected either from birth or merit. Among the number was Ermengitha, the aunt of Mildred, who was afterwards so much renowned for piety that her tomb, about a mile distant from the monastery, became a favourite resort for devout pilgrims.<sup>4</sup>

Mildred behaved with so much humility amongst her followers and pupils, as rather to make herself their servant than their mother and mistress; for she desired more to be loved than to be feared; and much more effectually brought her sisters on the way of religious perfection by her example than by her authority.<sup>5</sup> This abbess was celebrated as a saint after her death, and in her honour two parish churches in London were dedicated, St. Mildred’s in the Poultry and St. Mildred’s in Breadstreet. According to Wilson’s English Martyrology, St. Mildred died in 674; but this is an error, for she was not till after that Abbess of Minster, and her name is to be found subscribed in the Council of Beakenham, A. D. 694.<sup>6</sup> This great council was held by Withred, King of

<sup>1</sup> Butler, Weever.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale, Thorne. Leland is wide of the mark in naming 596, and also Speed, who says Queen Ermenburga (or Dompneva) lived A. D. 590; these dates would, as Dugdale remarks, have been long before her time.

<sup>3</sup> The Church of Minster is the most ancient structure in the island of Thanet, and has three aisles; in the choir are eighteen collegiate stalls; on the floor of the church, and under the porch, are several large flat gravestones, of very great antiquity; on the top of the spire of the steeple was formerly a globe, above which rose a cross, covered with lead, and upon this a vane, surmounted by a cross of iron, emblem of the power and superiority of Christianity over the earth; but these fancied monuments of idolatry were removed in the year 1647, by one Calmer, a rigid Calvinist, who had obtained the sequestration of the living by the refusal of Dr. Casaubon to take the covenant.—*Dugdale*. Minster was sometimes called St. Mildred’s Monastery.—*Weever*.

<sup>4</sup> Lives of Saints.

<sup>5</sup> Spelman.

<sup>6</sup> Hist. of the Church of Great Britain, 1674.



Kent, and Berthwald, Archbishop of Canterbury, and in it many things were concluded in favour of the Church. Five Kentish abbesses were present on the occasion, and not only subscribed their names and crosses to the constitutions concluded therein, but their subscriptions were placed not only before and above all presbyters, but also above that of Botred, a bishop present in the council. These abbesses' names are worthy of record; they were Mildred, Etheldreda, Æte, Wilnolde, and Hereswide.

That writing was a female accomplishment in the Saxon times, appears from a letter to St. Boniface from Leobgitha, a nun of St. Mildred's Monastery under Eadburga, sister of Domneva, the Abbess who succeeded Mildred. From Leobgitha's letter, it seems that it was customary for the nuns not only to read but to write Latin: she concludes her letter by saying, "Beneath are some verses which I have striven to compose according to the rules of poetic tradition, not with confident boldness offering them, but desiring to excite your superior mind, and ask your aid. *This art I learned from the institution of Eadburga, who ceaselessly versifies the sacred law.*" The following is a translation of the lines in question by a modern author of talent:—

"Oh! may the Almighty, all-creating King,  
Who in his Father's kingdom shines in light  
Ineffable, to thee aye safety bring,  
And grant thee endless joys in glory bright."

Golden ink was used by the Anglo-Saxons, and sometimes silver ink. Their red ink was made of vermillion or cinnabar; sometimes manuscripts were written with purple ink, and capital letters with an ink composed of vermillion and gum. The black ink used by the Saxons in England during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, preserved its original blackness much better than that used in succeeding ages.

Eadburga was abbess of St. Mildred's Miuster from the death of that princess till the year 751; and to her many of the letters of Boniface are addressed. This venerable prelate, who was a native of Wessex, had been sent over as a missionary into Germany, to preach to the idolaters there; Eadburga watched over him with a solicitude truly maternal, and the excellent Boniface exhibits in his correspondence with the royal abbess every token of esteem and respect. In one of his letters he styles her "the most honorable maiden, and most beloved Lady Eadburga, distinguished for the wisdom of her monastic government."<sup>2</sup> In one of the earliest epistles, Boniface styles himself "an humble deacon," and solicits the lady-abbess to accept some cinnamon and frankincense, and a *silver pen*.<sup>3</sup> In the 28th of this collection of Boniface's letters, also addressed to Eadburga, the Bishop entreats her to write the Epistles of St. Peter in letters of gold, "to inspire carnal men with the greater respect to that apostle," whom he calls the patron of his mission.

St. Eadburga built a new church in honor of St. Peter and St. Paul, and as soon as it was completed, caused the body of St. Mildred to be translated into it.<sup>4</sup> It was, together with that of Eadburga, in 1055,

<sup>1</sup> Miss Lawrence. See "Records of Women of England."

<sup>2</sup> Bonifacii Epist.    <sup>3</sup> Lawrence's Hist. of Women.    <sup>4</sup> Butler, Brit. Sancta.



translated to Canterbury, where they were deposited in St. Gregory's Church, by Archbishop Lanfranc.<sup>1</sup>

According to some writers, St. Mildred's Monastery was entirely destroyed by the Danes in 978, but another account, given by Thorne, fixes its destruction in the year 1011, at the time of Sweyn's invasion.

Mildgitha, the sister of Mildred, retired to the Monastery of Eastry, not far from Canterbury, which Egbert had himself built to atone for his crimes.<sup>2</sup> At a subsequent period Eastry, the manor of which Egbert had vested in the Church, was given to Christ Church, Canterbury, by Ethelred the Unready, for the support of the monks' kitchen.<sup>3</sup> An ancient tradition affirms, that the altar-tomb, placed at the east end of the little chapel which belonged to Eastry Court, was the sepulchre in which the bones of the two murdered brothers of Queen Domneva were enshrined, and over which a light constantly hovered.

The three sisters, Mildred, Mildgitha, and Milburga, foundress of the Abbey of Wenlock, in Shropshire, were all canonized.

The body of King Merowald, which had been enclosed in a wall of the church of the Abbey of Wenlock, was found at the same time as that of his daughter, Milburga.<sup>4</sup> Domneva, who is called "the virtuous mother of three virgin saints," had only one son by Merowald, who did not survive his infancy; so that his crown devolved on his younger brother Mercelyn, son of Penda, who likewise dying without issue male, the little kingdom of Herefordshire became re-united to the powerful territory of Mercia.

Queen Domneva survived her husband many years, and is frequently mentioned by our historians. Besides the Monastery of Minster, this Queen was foundress of a nunnery at Ebbsfleet, in the isle of Thanet;<sup>5</sup> but it was at Gloucester that she spent her remaining years after her widowhood.

<sup>1</sup> A deed of King Edward the Confessor, confirming certain privileges to the Church of St. Augustine, at Canterbury, runs thus:—

"Wherefore, I, Edward, king, by the grace of the King of Kings, and prince of the Angles, after long banishment being returned to my kingdom, by the will of the only compassionating God, and sitting again on the throne of my fathers, do grant and decree that the church which King Ethelbert, at the advice of the blessed Augustine, founded in honour of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and enriched with gifts, in which the bodies of the King himself, and of all the Bishops of Canterbury, and of the Kings, might be placed, be free, with all its appendages and adjacencies; seeing that, indeed, in the same church the above-named King lies buried, and the virgin Mildreth, beloved of God, rests, begotten of his stock. I also, being sprung of the same king's stock, and, by God's help, possessed of his kingdom, do deliver up the isle of Thanet, which King Egbert granted, by hereditary right, to the venerable Queen Domneva (to the mother, to wit, of St. Mildreth, as much as a hind had gone over in its course, for the slaying of her two brothers, Ethelbred and Ethelbert, whom, by order of the same king, Thunur, hateful to God, struck down by an unjust death, whom forthwith celestial vengeance terribly followed by cutting him off."—*Thorne's Chronicle*.

<sup>2</sup> Butler's Lives.

<sup>3</sup> A. D. 979, Philipott.

<sup>4</sup> Philipps, Bromton, Drayton.

<sup>5</sup> Speed, Tanner, Dugdale.

# ETHELBURGA AND FRIDOGITHA,

## QUEENS OF INA AND ETHELARD.

Invasion of Ivor and Ina—Conditions of the Conquerors—Marriage of Ethelburga to Ivor—His death, and her marriage to his successor, Ina—The arch of Taunton Castle—Ealdbryht Clito besieged by Ethelburga—The “Western Key of the Kingdom”—The Laws of Ina—Guala—The learned men of Ina’s time—The Abbey of Glastonbury, and its rich endowments—Ethelburga’s pious project—The splendid banquet and the contrast—Its effect on the King—Discourse of Ethelburga—The Crown resigned—Ethelard—Preparations for a pilgrimage to Rome—Departure of the King and Queen as pilgrims—Arrival in Rome—Religious acts—The Saxon school of Ina at Rome—Romescot—Return to England of the royal pair—Death of Ina—Ethelburga at Barking—Cuthberga, Abbess of Wimbourne—Canonization of the Abbess-Queen—The three daughters of Ina—Fridogitha’s liberality—Her piety and pilgrimage—Her death and canonization—St. Frideswide.

ETHELBURGA, and her brother Ethelard, the husband of Fridogitha, were descended from Cerdic, founder of the West Saxon monarchy. Their father was Ethelwald, son of Cenwalch, King of Wessex, by Saxburga, sister of Penda.

Two adventurous chieftains from Armorica, Ivor and Ina, having entered into an alliance,<sup>1</sup> invaded the British coast with a fleet, and committed great devastations, especially in Wessex, then governed by Kentwin, son of Kinegils. Ivor, who was son of Alan, King of Bretagne, having won from Kentwin Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset, was offered the peaceable enjoyment of the conquered territories, provided he would allow Kentwin to retain possession of the remainder of Wessex, and would marry Ethelburga, that prince’s cousin. At the time this proposal was made, both armies were drawn up in each other’s sight in hostile array: arms were, however, laid aside on Ivor’s accepting the terms. Ethelburga accordingly became the wife of the chief, and Ivor succeeded the famous Cadwallader, called “the Blessed,” who, after a life of warfare, ended his career as a pilgrim to the holy shrine, having named his relative Ivor as his heir, who accordingly took possession of Wessex. On his death, in the year 690, both his kingdom and his widow were appropriated by Ina, his companion in arms.

The circumstance of Ethelburga being the wife of both these princes, and the similarity of their names, has caused some confusion in the not a little entangled web of this portion of history, so conflicting are the narratives of the British chroniclers.

As Ivor, however, disappears early, and Ina is a character of impor-

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<sup>1</sup> Palgrave, Geoff. of Monmouth.

tance, it is sufficient to know that Ethelburga was his queen, of whom he appears to have been passionately fond. Nevertheless, a lady is mentioned as his mistress, for whose abode he constructed a building over an arch within his castle of Taunton, in Somersetshire,—a fortress founded by him for his own residence, in the year 700, and for the purpose of securing his conquests against the disaffected nobles of the surrounding district.<sup>1</sup> This arch the Queen, jealous of her rival, is said to have destroyed after her husband's death, together with part of the castle, to be revenged upon her. The statement, however, is apparently erroneous.<sup>2</sup>

The remains of the ancient castle of Taunton, founded by King Ina, are on the west side of the town, and are thus described:<sup>3</sup>—"The old building, being one hundred and ninety-five feet in front, had a circular tower at each end, of which one only is now remaining. The other, with the west end, has been long since destroyed, and a large house built in its room, that has been for many years a boarding-school for young ladies. The west end or wing is the shortest, being sixty-five feet in length, and was lately standing, as it was originally built, allowing for the injuries it had suffered from the cannon of its enemies, or rather from its greater enemy, time. The whole building had a flat roof, with parapet walls, and embrasures for guns; but part of the roof, within the memory of man, has been taken down, and the present erected in its stead. On viewing the back part of it, there could be lately discerned some breaches, made by cannon, in the old wall, which was judged, from its appearance, to be part of the castle built about the eleventh century."<sup>4</sup>

Of this edifice Ealdbryht Clito had obtained possession and had secured himself there.<sup>5</sup> This Saxon chief was one of those pretenders who so frequently disturbed the tranquillity of the latter part of King Ina's reign. The Queen very materially assisted her husband in opposing them; she herself laid siege to Taunton, and after compelling Ealdbryht to withdraw into Sussex, levelled the fortress with the ground. This act probably gave rise to the report of her having pulled down a part of the building from other motives. The castle was soon after rebuilt and fortified, and denominated the "Western Key of the Kingdom."<sup>6</sup>

The date of the destruction of Taunton by Ethelburga, was A. D. 721 or 722, according to the Saxon Chronicle. Ina afterwards directed his forces against the South Saxons, amongst whom Ealdbryht, after his defeat, was wandering in exile; he was finally slain by his antagonist;<sup>7</sup> when Ina had the satisfaction of witnessing the complete re-establishment of peace in his dominions.

To the period of these intestine divisions in Mercia may perhaps be referred the building of the ancient castle of Desborough, in Bucking-

<sup>1</sup> Collinson.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Benjamin Hammett wrote to Dr. Toulmin, stating that it had recently been altered by himself into a room, after a lapse of twelve hundred years.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Toulmin's History of Taunton.

<sup>4</sup> A Bishop of Winchester erected a new castle there about the date of the Conquest.

<sup>5</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Toulmin.

<sup>7</sup> Collinson's Somerset.



hamshire, which, some think, was named after Ethelburga, who is occasionally called Desburga.<sup>1</sup>

The laws which Bede has transmitted to us of Ina, testify to his character, which appears worthy of admiration: his zeal for religion, and desire to promote its interests, are a great feature in these laws. They were made at the instance of his father Kenred,<sup>2</sup> his bishops Edda and Erkenwold, his Ealdormen, and other witas in council assembled. One of these enjoins the baptism of infants within a month after their birth, under severe penalties, which penalties are greatly increased if it died unbaptized; another releases a slave from his master's jurisdiction forever, if he does servile work on a Sunday by his order; a third lays a fine on such as should strike in the church; a fourth orders the regular payment of tithes, with several others of a similar tendency. These laws of Ina are thought to have especially favoured the Britons, placing them in as advantageous a position as their conquerors.

It has been asserted that Ina himself set the example he desired to see followed, of intermarriages with the Saxons and British, by espousing Guala,<sup>3</sup> daughter of Cadwallader; but there is so much confusion of dates respecting this event, that it is difficult to come to a conclusion as to the facts. Milton, who names the marriage in his history, seems very doubtful about it; and historians are obliged to slur it over, evidently not being able to give the necessary details. It was not probable that during Ethelburga's lifetime, Ina should have made this alliance, as nothing is recounted of her divorce or resumption of lost dignity, circumstances very often occurring in these times; and the name of Ethelburga continually occurs throughout the long reign of Ina, both as a sharer of his warlike successes and his domestic peace. It seems more reasonable to suppose, that the similarity of names, and their repetition in the same family, may have led the chroniclers into error, than that injustice should have been done to the wife to whom Ina was so much attached.

The great respect shown by Ina to the distinguished scholar who illustrated his reign, St. Aldhelm, and also to the celebrated Winfreth, better known as Boniface, proves the worth of his own character, and the superiority of his mind.<sup>4</sup> Both these great men exercised a powerful and salutary influence on the acts of Ina, and both have left names capable of giving lustre to any reign.

One of the most memorable services to the Church, performed by Ina, was the rebuilding and endowing the magnificent old British Abbey of Glastonbury, which he did for the repose of the soul of a murdered kinsman, and which was a more Christian method of proving his piety than the signal revenge he thought himself bound to take on the murderers. Nothing could equal the splendour he lavished on this favourite building, and the riches he continued to shower upon it. It is recorded that he

<sup>1</sup> Camden.

<sup>2</sup> See the Preamble to his Laws: "I, Ina, with the counsel of my father Cenred."

<sup>3</sup> Lambert's Archives; Winchester Chronicle; Rudborne.

<sup>4</sup> William of Malmesbury.



adorned the chapels in the most sumptuous style; "garnishing and plating them over with two thousand six hundred and forty pounds' weight of silver, and erecting an altar which he ornamented with two hundred and sixty-four pounds' weight of gold;" besides this the chalices, censers, candlesticks, and robes, embroidered and enriched with gems and carving of the most elaborate description, were innumerable.

Baldred, a sub-king of Wessex, almost equal to himself in power and riches, vied with Ina in gifts to this world-famous monastery; and the names of Ethelburga and Ethelhard appear in the charters of 725,—the latter styling himself "the Queen's brother."<sup>1</sup>

Ina and his Queen also granted donations to Old Sarum, which, from some records contained in the Bodleian and Cottonian Libraries, appears to have been immediately under the protection of the Saxon princes. The following record is very curious, as it probably informs us of the only churches there in those early times; it begins thus:<sup>2</sup> "I, Ina, king, for the salvation of my soul, grant unto the church of St. James, in Saresbyrig, the lands of Fokenham, for the use of the monks serving God in that church. Whoever shall presume to infringe this my munificence, let him, in the day of judgment, be placed on the left hand of Christ, and receive the sentence of damnation with the devil and his angels." Then follows the grant of Ethelburga, his consort, to the nunnery of St. Mary, in Sarum: "I, Ethelburga, wife of Ina, king, &c., for the salvation of my soul, grant to God, and the nuns serving God in the church of St. Mary, in Saresbyrig, the lands of Beddington, with their appendages, &c."

Ethelburga had, for a length of time, endeavoured to persuade her husband, then in the decline of life, to relinquish the concerns of the world, and receive the habit of a monk. The King at last, after a long and fortunate reign of thirty-seven years, laid aside his regal dignity, through her exhortations, aided by the effect produced on his mind by the ingenious device with which they were accompanied.

The following incident, important in its results, is singularly characteristic of the time:—The royal pair one day paid a visit to one of their country residences, where a splendid banquet awaited their arrival, which was served with all the pomp and splendour attendant on regal luxury. Ethelburga resolved to convert this occasion to a useful moral lesson on the subject nearest to her heart. As soon as the King and Queen, with their cortège, had departed, the festive hall was, by her orders, scattered with filth and rubbish; while on the very bed, lately appropriated to their own repose, was placed a swinish litter. Scarcely had the travellers proceeded two miles on their road than Ethelburga made an excuse to return, and Ina, with much courtesy, assented to her request. His surprise was excessive on re-entering the hall, lately the scene of mirth and festivity, to perceive the disgusting change. In silent astonishment and displeasure he gazed upon the scene before him. When informed that it had been so directed by the Queen, he demanded

<sup>1</sup> Hearne's Glastonbury; Dugdale.

<sup>2</sup> Phillips's History of Old Sarum.

from Ethelburga an explanation of this strange mystery. She smiled, and answered: "My lord and husband! this is not, indeed, the noisy hilarity of yesterday: here are no brilliant hangings, no flattery, and no parasites: here are no tables weighed down with silver vessels; no exquisite delicacies to delight the palate: all these are gone like the smoke and wind. Have they not already passed away into nothingness? And should not we feel alarmed who covet them so much, because we shall be as transient? Are not all such things, are not we ourselves, like a river, hurrying, heedless and headlong, to the dark ocean of illimitable time? —unhappy must we be if we let them absorb our minds! Think, I entreat you, how disgusting those things become of which we have been so enamoured. See to what filthy objects we are attached. In these loathsome relics we may see what our pampered bodies will become. Ah! let us reflect, that the greater we have been, and the more powerful we are now, the more alarmed should be our solicitude; for the greater will be the punishment of our misconduct." <sup>1</sup>

The reflections of Ethelburga, thus strangely prefaced, were by no means uncommon in early times, when strong contrasts were often brought to bear on worldly pleasure. The singular and impressive lesson was not thrown away on the intelligent mind of Ina, who immediately determined on what was then held as the highest act of piety, namely, to make a pilgrimage to Rome. His first step was to renounce the temporal dignity of his earthly kingdom, to prepare himself for the one immortal. He forthwith resigned his crown, by will, to his brother-in-law Ethelard, and then made every necessary preparation for the religious life on which he proposed to enter; assuming a plebeian dress, renouncing his rank, and living in a private and retired manner with his beloved Ethelburga, who joyfully aided him in carrying out his good resolutions. It is even said that, during this period, Ina lived by the labour of his own hands, as was the custom of many of the religious of his times. <sup>2</sup>

Ethelburga accompanied her husband to Rome, assuming a masculine habit, probably for her protection on the journey, and, as is also asserted, retaining it on her arrival in that city. <sup>3</sup> They resided there, not far distant from each other, in a poor and private manner, "unlike, indeed, the dignity to which they had been accustomed, but filled with mutual love, charity, and devotion." <sup>4</sup> They passed their time in constant exercises of religion and benevolence; among which may be mentioned the founding of the Saxon school by Ina at Rome, for the benefit of such of his countrymen who might seek an education in that city, with a church for their service, and to provide convenience for their interment. To support these foundations, and the English residents there, Ina is said to have imposed the tribute of a penny on every family in England, which was sent to the Papal See under the name of Rome scot, or Peter's

<sup>1</sup> William of Malmesbury, S. Turner. It is to be regretted that the place which was the scene of this remonstrance is not positively mentioned: one of Ina's palaces and a castle was at Somerton, in Somersetshire, thirteen miles distant from Wells.—*Collinson*.

<sup>2</sup> Hume, Tanner.

<sup>3</sup> Bicknell.

<sup>4</sup> Butler.

pence.<sup>1</sup> The establishment of this tax is, however, more frequently attributed to Offa than to Ina.

Some authors state that Ina and his Queen died at Rome; others, that Ina, returning to England, shut himself up in a cloister, where he ended his days. According to Willis, the remains of this glorious monarch of the Angles repose in the middle of the body of the church of Wells (founded by himself), opposite to the north porch.

Queen Ethelburga is said to have entered into the Abbey of Barking after her return, her sister-in-law, Queen Cuthburga, Ina's sister, being abbess of the establishment; and when Cuthburga became Abbess of Wimbourne, in Dorsetshire, Ethelburga presided over the congregation of Barking till her death, after which she received the honours of canonization.

Ethelard was named by Ina his successor, as he had no male heirs. Camden, however, mentions three daughters of Ina, of whom he relates a story similar to that of the three daughters of King Lear, and which is supposed by some of the editors of Shakspeare,<sup>2</sup> to have suggested to the immortal bard the subject of his play. Ina is said to have inquired of these princesses, on some occasion, not only whether they loved him then, but whether they would continue to do so during their lives, above all others, to which the two eldest swore earnestly that they would. But the youngest and wisest of them, unwilling to flatter her father, told him honestly, "That albeit she did love and reverence him, and so would whilst she lived, as much as nature and daughterly duty at the utmost could expect; yet she did think that one day it would come to pass, that she should affect another more fervently, meaning her husband, when she was married, who being made one flesh with her, as God by commandment had told, and nature had taught her, she was to cleave fast to, forsaking father and mother, kith and kin." This is all we hear of the daughters of Ina, whether by Ethelburga or Guala, and Camden gives it from an anonymous authority.

Ethelard became king in 729, trod in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor, and in all his undertakings was assisted by his Queen Fridogitha, who especially distinguished herself by the generosity she displayed in her donations to the Church, on which she bestowed the greater part of her own patrimony. The first year of their accession to power, both the King and Queen liberally endowed the Abbey of Glastonbury. Fridogitha herself bestowed on it the manor of Brunantun (or Brompton-Ralph), containing within its limits five hides of land, which remained in the possession of the monks till after the Norman Conquest, when King William gave it to Sir William de Mohun.<sup>3</sup>

Among other acts of religious charity, Fridogitha prevailed on her hus-

<sup>1</sup> Every family, possessed of goods to the value of twenty pence in Wessex, paid a yearly tax of a penny as "King's alms." This tax, collected at Lammass, was paid to St. Peter and the Church of Rome; hence it was at first called "Rome scot," and afterwards "Peter's pence." [Weever, Matthew of Westminster, Dugdale, &c.]

<sup>2</sup> Johnson and Stevens.

<sup>3</sup> Collinson's Somerset, iii. 505; Dugdale.

band to bestow the manor of Taunton on the church of Winchester; a truly regal gift, as Taunton, at that very time, was the chief seat of the Mercian sovereigns. Some writers assert Taunton to have been the gift of Emma, Queen of Ethelred the Unready; but as it is not named among the manors bestowed by that Queen, it is much more probable that it was given by Fridogitha. Ethelard gave, on his own part, seven manes or dwellings for peasants.<sup>1</sup> This donation was made rather more than three hundred years before the Conquest of the Normans in England, and in the interval, such a remarkable share of immunities, prerogatives, and privileges were appended to it, as are hardly to be found in the description of any other manor in the Norman survey.

In 737, Fridogitha undertook a journey to Rome, accompanied by Forthere, Bishop of Sherborne, in Dorsetshire. This prelate is described as "a man of praiseworthy erudition, especially in the Holy Scriptures,"<sup>2</sup> and is numbered among our early writers. On the Queen's return to England, she abandoned all her earthly possessions, and devoted herself exclusively to the service of God. At her death, she was interred in the Cathedral of Winchester.

The daughter of Ethelard and Fridogitha, who emulated the pious example of her mother, became one of the saints of the Anglo-Saxon Church, under the name of St. Frideswide.

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<sup>1</sup> Dugdale; Toulmin's History of Taunton.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew of Westminster.



## QUENDRIDA-PETRONILLA.

Melo-dramatic legend of Quendrida—King Offa screened by monkish writers—Unknown crime of Petronilla—Exposure in an open boat—Stranding of the beautiful stranger on the Welsh coast—Meeting of Offa and Quendrida—Fascination of the young King—Opposition of his parents—The royal marriage—Death of both Offa's parents—Offa's early deficiencies—Sudden change—Beornred's wars—His defeat—Offa's dyke—The Emperor Charlemagne—His letters and presents to Offa—Demand in marriage of Prince and Princess—Interruption of the friendship of the two Kings—Close of the French ports—Alcuin the Learned—Harmony re-established—The Princess Eadburga's marriage—Young Ethelbert, King of East Anglia—His proposal for the hand of the beautiful Etheldritha, youngest daughter of Offa—Excellent character of Ethelbert—His arrival in Mercia—Omens—Rich gifts and grand retinue of the bridegroom—Etheldritha, at her window, admires the beauty and grandeur of her lover—Quendrida's envy and hatred—Offa's welcome—The Queen's treacherous proposal—The chair of state—The canopy and the well—The murder accomplished—Despair of the bride—Her anathema—She leaves her father's court—Offa's remorse—Banishment of the guilty Queen—The spoils she took—Robbers—Her deserved fate—Offa builds cathedrals—The shrine of St. Ethelbert—Divine judgment on Offa's race.

THE history of Quendrida<sup>1</sup> has in it so much of melodrame, that, but for the repetition of her story by several chroniclers, great part of it would be considered fabulous. It is probable that the Monk of St. Alban's, in his account, has said more than the truth, in order to screen King Offa, the founder of his abbey, from the reproach of a foul murder which stained his reign, and has thrown all the odium of a fearful crime on the Queen; but other historians tell of her guilt,<sup>2</sup> and recount her strange adventures, therefore they cannot be rejected in a record of her life.

Tradition does not acknowledge Quendrida as an Anglo-Saxon,<sup>3</sup> but insists that she was of Frankish birth, and her name Petronilla; that for some crime not specified, she had been condemned by Charlemagne's officers of justice to be exposed in an open boat, and sent adrift at the mercy of winds and waves. The frail bark was borne onwards until it stranded on the Welsh coast, and there, in an evil hour, the beautiful stranger's half-lifeless body was found, and the fair-distressed conducted to the presence of the young Prince, whose destiny she was to become. She told

<sup>1</sup> The name is variously spelt Drida, Cynedrida, and Cynethryth; but the *th*, in British, is pronounced like *d*, and the above spelling has been adopted as less difficult to the eye, in this, as in other cases.

<sup>2</sup> Roger of Wendover; Sax. Chron.; Vita Offæ II.

<sup>3</sup> Lappenberg, Bromton.

her story artlessly, and with tears and entreaties for succour, related how she was the victim of conspiracy, being of the royal house of Charles the Great, whose mind had been poisoned against her; that she was innocent of all guilt, and had been most cruelly persecuted, the only reason for which treatment she traced to her rejection of the addresses of one who was hateful to her.

Her youth, her beauty, her eloquence, and her sorrows, immediately won the confidence of those who had saved her; and young Offa's heart became at once the prey of her bright eyes, more seducing in their tears. Deeply grateful for his commiseration, she is said to have exclaimed: "God, who frees the innocent from the snares of the wicked, has now happily placed me under the wings of your protection, has changed my misery to joy, and has made me feel more glad of my exile than I ever felt in the land that gave me birth."<sup>1</sup>

The fascinated Offa gave the rescued beauty in charge to his mother Marcellina, who, however, it seems, had even in the beginning, some doubts as to the truth of her story; but Quendrida, secure of her conquest, had no fears, and did not conceal her haughty disposition or her proud aspirations. All the remonstrances of both Offa's parents were vain, and the infatuated Prince made the dangerous waif thrown on his shores the partner of his fortunes, without hesitation. "The match was fatal" to both father and mother, who did not live a year after their son's marriage.

Of Offa himself strange marvels are related, as that he was lame, blind, and dumb from his birth, but recovered all his faculties suddenly, when the usurper Beornred persecuted his parents, and oppressed his country. Till this time he was called Winfrith, but the name of Offa was then bestowed on him, because of the similarity of the occurrence to that recorded of the Danish Offo, or Uffo, son of Wærmund, "King of Angeln."<sup>2</sup>

Offa (called the Second) was of the royal house of Wibba, and son of an Ealdorman, called Thingfrith; he appears to have been the nearest relative of King Eanwulf, if not his grandson, as in one of his charters he calls himself. In early life he had continually to contend with the turbulent chief Beornred, who had usurped the government of Mercia, but over whom he at length triumphed; his dominion was not, however, firmly established till Beornred's death, in 757.<sup>3</sup>

For a series of years he was occupied in repelling the incursions of the Welsh; and the famous dyke, known by his name, was formed by him, from the mouth of the Dee to the Wye, to keep out his troublesome neighbours. It is interesting, in many parts of that country, to trace remains of the deep boundary, which is still discernible.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Speed, Vita Offæ, Turner.

<sup>2</sup> Nennius, Alfred of Beverley, Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>3</sup> William of Malmesbury.

<sup>4</sup> In the year 777, Oswestry was taken by Offa from the Britons, and the kingdom of Powis was reduced to the western side of the celebrated ditch still known by his name.

This ditch, called Clawdd Offa, extended from the river Wye, along the counties of Hereford and Radnor, in Montgomeryshire, from Pwll y Piod, an ale-house on the road between Bishop's Castle and Newtown; thence it passes northward,

The ceaseless contentions of these times carry the historian in a perpetual circle of bloody wars and usurpations, until he no longer wonders that the poet-chronicler Milton lost all patience, and exclaimed "Such

near Mellington Hall, near which is an encampment, called *Caer-din*, by Brompton Mill, where there is a mount; Lunor Park, near Montgomery, *Forden-heath*, *Nanteribba*, at the foot of an ancient fortress, *Leighton-hall*, and *Buttington Church*. Here it is lost for five miles; the channel of the Severn probably serving for that space as a continuation of the boundary. Just below the conflux of the *Bele* and the *Severn*, it appears again, and passes by the churches of *Llandysilio* and *Llanymynech*, to the edge of the vast precipitous limestone rock. From this place, it runs by *Tref y Clawdd*, over the horse-course on *Cefn-y-bwch*, above *Oswestry*, then above *Sellatyn*; whence it descends to the *Ceiriog*, and then to *Glynn*, where there is a large breach, supposed to be the place of interment of the English who fell in the battle of *Crogen*. It then goes by *Chirk Castle*, and below *Cefn-y-wern*, crosses the *Dee* and the *Ruabon-road* near *Plas Madoc*, forms part of the turnpike road to *Wrexham*, to *Pentre-hychan* where there is a mount; then by *Plas Power* to *Adwy'r Clawdd*, near *Minera*, by *Brymbo*; crosses the *Cegidog* river, and through a little valley, upon the south side of *Bryniorkyn* mountain, to *Coedtalwrn*, and *Cae-dwn*, a farm near *Treyddin Chapel*, in the parish of *Mold* (pointing towards the *Clwydian hills*), beyond which there can no farther traces be discovered. It seems probable that *Offa* imagined that the *Clwydian hills*, and the deep valley that lies at their base, would serve as a continuance of this prohibitory line: he had carried his arms over most parts of *Flintshire*, and vainly imagined that his labours would restrain the *Cambrian* inroads in one part, and his orders prevent any incursions beyond these natural limits, which he had decreed to be the boundaries of his new conquests. "It is observable," says *Pennant*, "that, in all parts, the ditch is on the *Welsh* side; and that there are numbers of small artificial mounts, the sites of small forts, along its course." These were garrisoned, and seem intended for the same purpose as the towers in the famous *Chinese wall* — to watch the motions of their neighbours, and to repel hostile incursions. The folly of this great work appeared on the death of *Offa*: the *Welsh*, with irresistible fury, despised his toils, and carried their ravages far and wide on the *English* marches. Superior force often repelled them. Sanguinary laws were made by the victorious *Harold* against any that should transgress the limits prescribed by *Offa*. The *Welshman* that was found in arms, on the *Saxon* side of the ditch, was to lose his right hand.

"There is a famous thing,  
Called *Offa's Dyke*, that reacheth farre in length,  
All kind of ware the *Danes* might thither bring;  
It was free ground, and called the *Britons'* strength.  
*Watt's Dyke*, likewise, about the same was set,  
Between which two the *Danes* and *Britons* met,  
And traffic still, but passing bounds by sleight,  
The one did take the other pris'ner streight."

The great dyke and fosse, called *Watt's Dyke*, is little known, notwithstanding it is equal in depth, though not in extent, to that of *Offa*, with which it has been frequently confounded. Of the formation of this dyke, as to time or occasion, no authentic information can be found. It runs nearly in a direction with that of *Offa*, but at unequal distances, from five hundred yards to four miles. The space intervening between the two was considered as free ground, where the *Britons*, *Danes*, &c., might meet with safety for commercial purposes.

*Watt's Dyke* appears at *Maesbury*, and terminates at the *Dee*, below the *Abbey of Basingwerk*. The southern end of the line is lost in morassy grounds, but was probably continued to the river *Severn*. It extends its course from *Maesbury* to the *Mile Oak*; from thence, through a field called *Maes-y-garreg Lwyd*, between two remarkable pillars of unhewn stone; passes by the town, and from



bickerings to recount, met often in these our writers, what more worth is it than to chronicle the wars of kites and crows, flocking and fighting in the air?"

"Nothing," however, observes the learned Lappenburg, "would more raise the wars of Offa above this contemptuous mention of the great epic poet of England, than if it were ascertained how far all these chiefs were influenced by the mighty ruler of the Franks, Charles the Great. If any reliance can be placed on the monkish biographer, the Kings of Kent, previously to the invasion of that state by Offa, had applied to Charles for aid and protection. The menacing letters of the Emperor were unheeded by the Mercian, and in the course of years their mutual success united the lord of the Germanic insular realm with the chief of the Roman continent. Charles sent to Offa, or as he himself expresses it, "the most powerful ruler of the East to the most powerful ruler of the West," many costly presents, the catalogue of which has been preserved, though not that of the presents sent in return, which to us would have been of far greater interest."<sup>1</sup>

In a letter extant of Charlemagne<sup>2</sup> to Offa, mention is made of a Hunnic sword and belt and two silken mantles. The Emperor calls the King his "brother," but this is probably merely in courtesy, and cannot be admitted as an argument of his being related through his Queen Quendrida, as some have thought.

The friendship of the two courts was interrupted by a discord of some moment.

Geroaldus, Abbot of St. Wandrille or Fontenelle, had frequently been employed by Charlemagne in his missions to the court of Mercia. This prelate was sent thither to demand the hand of Offa's daughter for his son Charles. His negotiation was, however, unsuccessful; for though the very friendly intercourse between the two kings had warranted the request, Offa refused to grant Eadburga to the French prince, unless Bertha, daughter of Charlemagne, were bestowed on his own son and successor, Egfrid, who is described as being "the only joy and pride of his parents." The desire of Offa to form a high alliance for his only son

thence to Old Oswestry, and by Pentreclawdd to Gobowen, the site of a small fort called Bryn y Castell, in the parish of Whittington; runs by Prys Henlle and Belmont; crosses the Ceiriog, between Brynkinallt and Pont y Blew forge, and the Dee below Nant y Bela; from whence it passes through Wynn-stay Park, by another Pentreclawdd, to Erddig, where there was another strong fort on its course; from Erddig, it runs above Wrexham, near Melin Puleston, by Dolydd, Maesgwyn, Rhos-ddu, Croes-oneiras, &c.; goes over the Alun, and through the township of Llai, to Rhydin, in the county of Flint; above which is Caer Estyn, a British post; from hence it runs by Hope Church, along the side of Molesdale, which it quits towards the lower part, and turns to Mynydd Sychdyn, Monachlog, near Northop, by Northop Mills, Bryn-moel, Coed y Llys, Nant y Flint, Cefn y Coed, through the strand-fields, near Holywell, to its termination below the Abbey of Basingwerk. A dyke and rampart, similar in appearance, and not unlike in name, runs through the counties of Wilts and Somerset, called Wans Dyke, perhaps from Gwan, a perforation. [History of Oswestry.]

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Lappenberg's History of England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings, translated by Benjamin Thorpe, F. S. A.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, Malmesbury, Leland.



and heir was extremely natural, but Charlemagne was indignant at the presumption of the demand.

It is remarkable that this Princess Bertha, her father's especial favourite, was afterwards, or perhaps at that very time, secretly united to Angilbert, one of the most learned men of his time, who became Abbot of the powerful Monastery of St. Riquier, in Picardy. Bertha is described as being "the softened image" of her great father, in mind, voice, aspect, and bearing.<sup>1</sup>

The fathers, therefore, contended for the honour of their respective priceless treasures; but Charlemagne's anger seems to have been excited beyond bounds, and he immediately ordered the French ports to be closed against the Anglo-Saxon merchants. Thus all intercourse between the two nations was reciprocally interdicted. There had always been a great repugnance among the Saxon kings to intermarriage with foreigners, of which few instances occur prior to the time of Edward the Elder, whose sisters contracted splendid foreign alliances. Bertha, Emma, and Judith, were among the few solitary instances of a prior date; and after Edward the Elder was Emma of Normandy, whose tie with Ethelred was the first step to the Norman conquest.

The learned Saxon Alcuin, the friend and confidant of Charlemagne, was despatched to England as ambassador, to restore the broken amity of the two realms, which had not been destined to be of long duration. In a letter of Alcuin, quoted by Malmesbury, is the following passage: "I know not what is to become of us. Some dissension, which seems to have been fomented by diabolical skill, has arisen lately between King Charles and King Offa, so that all communication by sea is forbidden to the merchants on both sides. It is said, that I am about to be sent to England for the purpose of establishing peace."<sup>2</sup>

The object of Alcuin's mission was accomplished, and harmony was re-established between the rulers.

The hand of Eadburga, which had been refused to the French Prince, was given to Bertric, King of Kent, heir-apparent to the throne of East Anglia, in the event of the death of Ethelbert, a young and amiable prince who yet remained unmarried. The union of Bertric and Eadburga took place in 787, Aldric, the father of that king, being also associated in the government.<sup>3</sup>

Ethelbert had resolved to devote his whole life to the service of God, and not to enter the married state; but his courtiers overruled this resolution, and persuaded him to seek the alliance of some princess worthy of perpetuating his royal race. Ethelbert had heard of the beauty and virtues of Etheldritha, the youngest of the daughters of King Offa, and his friend and confidant, Earl Oswald, strongly urged him to demand her hand. A council was held, at which the nobles of East Anglia were all present, together with Laonorine, the Queen Mother. Every person there assembled, except that royal lady, approved of the proposed marriage, and it was settled that it should take place.

<sup>1</sup> Angilbert's *Carolus Magnus*.

<sup>2</sup> Turner.

<sup>3</sup> Sax. Chron. and Asser's *Life of Alfred*.

On the part of the Mercians, Humbert, Archbishop of Litchfield, had suggested Ethelbert to Offa as a suitable husband for his daughter, and was seconded by Unwona, Bishop of Leicester.<sup>1</sup> The excellent character of the Prince rendered the match in every way desirable, and the Mercian King invited him to his court to celebrate his nuptials with the fair Etheldritha. When Ethelbert's proposal was thus accepted it was settled that the marriage should take place at the same time as that of her sister Elfreda with Ethelred, the Northumbrian King. The nuptial ceremony for both the royal couples was arranged to be performed at the ancient Mercian palace of Sutton Wallis, near Hereford, whither Ethelbert was to repair for the purpose.

On the day previous to that eventful one when

"Our kindred all within the halle,  
The wedding feast arraye;  
When the song shall sound, and the dance goe rounde,  
And the musicke merrilie playe,"<sup>2</sup>

the young King of the East Angles departed on his journey towards Mercia, full of hope and expectation, attended by a retinue of his own nobility. In conformity with his usual custom prior to commencing his journey, he heard mass with habitual attention and devotion. Late in the evening Ethelbert arrived in the neighborhood of Sutton,<sup>3</sup> where, instead of entering the town, he ordered his tents to be pitched, that he might pass the night in the open country. Some East Anglian nobles, however, were deputed to proceed to the palace of Offa, and announce his arrival, with the cause of his coming, and at the same time were instructed to present to the Mercian King some rich gifts prepared by Ethelbert, his future son-in-law. They were most graciously received, and Offa signified his approbation of the East Anglian's suit.

Ethelbert, after a night harassed with frightful dreams, which seemed to forbode some impending calamity, sent forward his chariots and pack-horses laden with rich baggage, well-stored chests, and provisions; and accompanied by an immense number of men on foot and horseback, followed himself, with a magnificent band of his knights, arranged in due order. The approach of this cavalcade was soon rumoured through the town, and at length reached the palace of King Offa. Amongst others who were attracted to behold the sight was Etheldritha, the maiden daughter of King Offa. From a window of the lofty palace of her father, she beheld the young King Ethelbert and his knights entering the courtyard. She marked with a woman's interest the splendid spectacle, and then hastened to her mother to speak to her of the manly beauty of Ethelbert, of the stately nobles, the valiant knights, and the wondrous splendour of his retinue. Queen Quendrida listened to her daughter's enthusiasm, and her malice and envy were alike excited by the narrative.

<sup>1</sup> This see was removed from Dorchester to Leicester in 737. It eventually merged into the present Lincoln bishopric.

<sup>2</sup> "The Greye Baron," from Dovaston's Legendary Ballads.

<sup>3</sup> Offa had another royal residence at Tamworth, where his successors, Kinwulf, Beornwulf, and Buthred, afterwards resided.

She had opposed the marriage from the first, disliking Ethelbert for his religious devotion ; for, being an unbeliever herself, Christian observances were hateful in her eyes. She had been deeply mortified that her daughters should have been unable to form foreign alliances, and had even persecuted the Archbishop of Litchfield and the other bishops, because, in the marriages she sought for her other daughters, they had opposed her policy, as ruinous to Mercia ; and now nothing could exceed her vexation when she found that she was likely to be foiled in her last expectation ; meanwhile Offa, delighted to receive Ethelbert, his daughter's bridegroom, bestowed on him a paternal embrace, accompanied with the words, " Welcome, my son ; welcome, my son-in-law, welcome ! You shall henceforth be regarded as my favourite child ! " Quendrida stood aloof, beholding the joy of the meeting with a scowling brow, and revolving in her mind how to make Ethelbert feel the effects of her resentment.

Unsuspecting of her designs, Offa afterwards repaired to his wife, to ascertain when it would be convenient to her that her daughter's marriage should be celebrated. It was then that Quendrida spoke as follows :—

" The subject is one which requires very grave consideration. You are well aware that the petty princes of the East Angles have long desired to obtain dominion over the Mercians. You have full knowledge of the hereditary enmities, and the mutual injuries inflicted upon each other by both these kingdoms ; and now I am greatly deceived, if ambition rather than affection has not attracted Ethelbert to this court. Marriage is the pretext, friendship the cloak, which have served the purpose of the keen spy, who would judge for himself the weakness that accompanies your advanced years, and the best means of insuring your destruction. You should regard your guest, not as a lover, but as a hostile commander ; for it is in the latter capacity he has appeared before you, accompanied by numbers of soldiers, large enough for an army—too large for the purposes of peace.

" Suppose he marries your daughter, and that such is the sole cause of his coming ; then by right of that marriage he will regard himself as your heir, and entitled to succeed you on the throne. As an impatient heir, he will daily wish for your death ; and all that you now peacefully enjoy, he will constantly seek for, and as sedulously struggle to acquire. You prepare a rod of chastisement for yourself ; you knot together the whip with which you will hereafter be beaten, if you give to one like this, pretensions to be your successor. Make him your son-in-law, your life is in peril, and your crown in danger ; or if life be long spared to you, it must be passed amid the terrors of fear ; you exchange the independence of a free king in your own dominions for the trembling timidity of an Eastern slave.

" Suppose, on the other hand, that you now reject his alliance, and that you allow him, justly offended with the treatment he has experienced, to withdraw from your kingdom, there can be no doubt that you expose yourself to as great a danger as that which you desire to escape. He now knows the roads of your kingdom—he requires no spy to tell him what parts of it are the most accessible for his troops—how it can be best assailed, or what are the points on which you will rely for your



defence. He has seen and has noted your age and your infirmity; and all he has to do is to make as a pretext for hostilities, the affront to which you have subjected him, and on the instant he proclaims war, he begins the destruction of your kingdom, and deprives you of life.

"There is but one of two modes of escaping from the danger and perplexity entailed upon you by the coming of this guest; either he will in a short time cause your death, or you now must cause his—in my mind a just and fitting punishment for his presumption."

When Quendrida finished speaking, Offa sighed deeply, and after considering for a few moments, answered her thus:—

"Your discourse has, in sooth, convinced me that I am reduced to a dangerous and pitiable plight; for I plainly see that on this side there is imminent peril, and on the other irretrievable infamy.<sup>1</sup> Far, far, however, be from me the detestable crime that you suggest; a crime which, if once committed, would bring eternal opprobrium upon me and my successors."

He quitted her presence, and soon after rejoined his royal guest with an appearance of tranquillity which covered the real anguish which preyed upon his mind. A magnificent banquet was served, with costly wine,<sup>2</sup> accompanied by music, singing, and dancing. The two Princes sat down together to the entertainment, and the day passed away in joy and merriment. But Quendrida, with "murder in her smile," meantime had prepared a tragic ending to the scene. Close by the couch which Ethelbert was to occupy at night, she caused a magnificent throne to be placed, over which was erected a royal canopy, the sides of it decorated with rich hangings. Beneath this chair of state there was a deep well. Such was the contrivance on which she had decided, and having seen that all was sure, she joined Offa and Ethelbert in the banquetting hall. There, entering into a lively conversation, she after a time inquired of the unsuspecting Ethelbert—"Will you not come, my son, and visit the maiden who is to be united to you in marriage? She anxiously awaits a visit from you in my chamber, and will, no doubt, hear with pleasure the words of love, when pronounced by her intended husband."

Ethelbert rose at once and attended Quendrida to the fatal spot, whence his attendants were at the same instant excluded. The Princess was not there, as her expectant lover had supposed, but Quendrida, turning suddenly round, said: "Seat yourself there, my son, until she arrives." The young King obeyed, and the moment he took his seat on the throne, the platform on which it was erected gave way beneath him, and in a mass fell with him and upon him into the gulph beneath,<sup>3</sup> where, by the aid of assassins concealed in the neighbouring apartments by the Queen, he was speedily suffocated; for Quendrida aided her confederates by flinging on the unfortunate Prince the pillows, bedding, hanging, and tapestry, lest the sound of his dying groans and shrieks should betray her

<sup>1</sup> Bromton.

<sup>2</sup> Wine was said to be "the drink of the elders and the wise," and only seen at the tables of the great.

<sup>3</sup> The Monk of St. Albans, &c.



crime. To complete the deed, the scarcely lifeless body was decapitated by the order of the relentless Quendrida.

That this horrible act was entirely perpetrated by the Queen without the knowledge of Offa, appears the more unlikely, since it is certain that he immediately after invaded East Anglia, and annexed it to his own dominions, which would seem to betray the motive of the deed.<sup>1</sup> So suddenly, indeed, did he march thither, that no measures could be taken for its defence, and it was added easily to his other conquests.

The innocent bride Etheldritha, becoming suddenly conscious of the horrible truth, in the midst of the general consternation which filled the palace had yet found time to convey warning of her parent's treachery to the East Anglian nobles who had accompanied Ethelbert, so that they were able to make their escape, while the unfortunate Princess herself, in her consternation and despair, filled the air with lamentations, and even in the extremity of her anguish was led to curse the authors of her being, and prophetically to denounce the vengeance of Heaven which was about to punish them for their awful crime. To Quendrida she declared in words, as if inspired, that her only son Egfrid would not live three years longer, and that she should herself die in a few months, overcome with equal misery and despair to that she had caused.

Etheldritha instantly abandoned her father's court, and in the Monastery of Croyland, in Lincolnshire, received the habit of a nun, preferring rather "to be as a serf in the house of the Lord, than to dwell as a queen in the palace of sinners;" in that solitary retirement, at a distance from the vain pleasures of the world, she passed in sadness and contemplation the remainder of her days.

Offa, after the deed of murder had been perpetrated, took to his chamber for three days, which he passed without nourishment, sighing and weeping, his mind apparently occupied by the deepest grief. Whether from remorse or disgust, he avoided the sight of his guilty Queen, and commanded that Quendrida should be removed at once from court to one of the most remote and solitary places in Mercia, to be placed there in the closest confinement. He did not put her to death, but professed to desire that the prolongation of her life would afford her time for repentance. He suffered her, however, to carry to her prison an immense treasure, "the spoils of the oppressed." She had with her the instruments of her doom; for these heaps of accumulated gold and silver induced robbers to attack the mansion in which she dwelt, for the sake of so splendid a booty; and the Queen, being seized by the marauders, who little heeded her dignity, was flung into a deep well, where, bruised and maimed like her ill-fated victim, she expired in torment. This Lady Macbeth of her time is said to have been called by the Saxon name of Leog, signifying "a queen to be feared." Offa witnessed the retribution of Heaven, on the author of what was perhaps a crime in which he had participated; he lived, moreover, to repent. Desirous of re-establishing his character in the estimation of the world, and to appease his remorse, or quiet the soul of the murdered prince, he paid great court to the clergy, and as-

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<sup>1</sup> Turner's Anglo-Saxons.

sumed the monkish devotion of his times. He even undertook a pilgrimage to Rome, to obtain absolution from the hands of the supreme Pontiff. He was ordered to erect a cathedral over the remains of Ethelbert; and on his return the Cathedral of Hereford<sup>1</sup> was built, whither, as soon as it was completed, he removed the mangled relics of the ill-starred prince, which had been dishonourably buried, at the time of the murder, on the bank of a small river near the palace. The edifice was then solemnly dedicated in the name of the royal martyr, who had been previously canonized by the Pope.

The shrine in which the ashes of St. Ethelbert repose is yet in existence, and an exact representation of the original may be seen in Strutt's Anglo-Saxon Antiquities. "It consists of a curious piece of enamelled copper, lined with oak, which last is supposed to be part of the floor on which the murder of the saint was committed. The machine held by the two attendants, on which the dead body lies, appears to be the bier on which the corpse was carried on the shoulders of attendants to the place of sepulture. The writing on the tablet held by the attendant priest, is so obliterated as to render it impossible to be decyphered."

Offa, who is said to have bestowed a tenth of his goods on the Church, having richly endowed the Cathedral of Hereford, founded also the Abbey of St. Alban's; and surely if the practice of saintly virtues claimed canonization, the honour was merited by Ethelbert, who, when living, was beloved and admired of all for his goodness and piety. One of the sayings attributed to him was the following: "That the greater men were, the more humbly they ought to bear themselves; for the Lord putteth proud and mighty men from their seats, and exalteth the humble and meek."<sup>2</sup> In the centre of the Abbey of St. Alban's may be seen a rude painting of the monarch, with an inscription underneath, setting forth that it was founded by Offa in 793.

The Abbey at Bath was likewise of Offa's foundation;<sup>3</sup> he enriched the church at Westminster, and made also rich gifts to Canterbury, and other places far beyond his own dominions.

Retributive justice pursued all his family; his daughter Alfreda, married to Ethelred of Northumberland, was beheaded, by her husband's orders, before a year of her marriage was past. It is said that this pair were united at the very time of the murder of Ethelbert; and Strutt has published a curious picture from an ancient Saxon book in the Cottonian Library, representing the double marriage of the sisters, as if the nuptial

<sup>1</sup> Weever.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> After Ethelbert's murder, Offa had removed to Bath, which city he had conquered after it had been more than two hundred years under the dominion of the West Saxons, who had rebuilt the Roman walls, employing in that task the ruins of temples, mausoleums, and triumphal arches, devastated in their conquest under Ceaulin and Cuthwin, A. D. 577. Roman sculptures had been inserted in these new walls for ornament. Thus the city was remodelled according to the Saxon taste, and the Temple of Minerva converted into a Christian house of nuns, dedicated to St. Peter: in this foundation Offa placed a society of secular nuns. — Collinson.

ceremony with Ethelbert had actually taken place,—which is not unlikely, the better to secure the victim.

Ethelred of Northumberland was put to death by his subjects in the year of Offa's demise, and his son Egfrid, on whom his hopes were placed, died within a few months of his father: thus the line of Offa became extinct, and in the person of Egbert, the glorious Mercian kingdom became merged in that of Wessex.

Offa's grave was accidentally discovered in the churchyard of Hemel Hempstead. "In digging a vault, the sexton, when he had excavated the earth about four feet below the surface of the ground, found his spade strike against something solid, which, upon inspection, proved to be a large wrought stone, the lid of a coffin; and under it was found the coffin entire; which was afterwards taken up in perfect condition; but the bones contained therein, on being exposed to the air, crumbled to dust. On the lid of the coffin is an inscription, partly effaced by time, but still sufficiently legible decidedly to prove that it contained the ashes of the celebrated Offa. The coffin is about six and a half feet long, and contains a niche or resting-place for the head, and also a groove on each side, for the arms, likewise for the legs; it is curiously carved, and altogether unique of the kind."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Monthly Magazine, vol. xxvi. Oct. 1st, 1808.

## EADBURGA.—ELFLEDA.

Pride of Eadburga—Prince Egbert's banishment—He seeks shelter with Offa, is refused hospitality—Flies to the court of Charlemagne—The Queen's influence; her jealousy, and vindictive character—Infatuation of her husband—Her hatred of Worr—Her attempts to ruin him—Resistance of Bertric—The banquet—The poisoned cup—Death of the King and his friend—Flight of the Queen—She seeks the court of Charlemagne; is well received there at first—Her beauty and her gifts—Change of public estimation—Charlemagne's sarcastic offer—The incautious reply of the widow—The Emperor's contempt—His bestowal of a convent on her—Her conduct as Abbess—Her expulsion and degraded position—Her arrival at Pavia and destitution—Her death in misery—Her quaint epitaph—Detestation of her memory—Title of Queen not allowed by Anglo-Saxons—Egbert's succession—The contrast of the sisters—The Abbess of Croyland—Witlaf's sojourn and gifts; his attachment to Etheldritha—The Danes—Elfleda, daughter of Kenulf—Her son Wistan—Rejected offer of Berferth—Murder of Wistan.

EADBURGA, the daughter of Offa, who had married Bertric, King of Kent, is said to have "borne herself very highly, on account of her parentage."<sup>1</sup> Her pride was ill-founded, for she inherited the worst qualities of her mother, without any of her father's merits, being disdainful, capricious, and of violent passions. She is accused of having incited her husband Bertric to banish Prince Egbert, the true heir to the crown, on pretence of his being engaged in a conspiracy against him: there are, however, writers who say that Egbert fled from the court of the West Saxons, because his father-in-law Bertric had attempted his life; his reason for the young prince's destruction being to remove a competitor for the throne, the title of Egbert, as son of Alchmond, though set aside in his favour, being superior to his own. The fugitive prince, whose story somewhat resembles that of Edwin of Northumberland, sought protection with Offa. But that monarch was not more kindly disposed towards him than his daughter and her husband, and Egbert was finally compelled to seek his safety with Charlemagne in the court of France: in that country it was that the royal exile acquired the accomplishments which enabled him, at a future period, to become so shining a character on the English throne.<sup>2</sup>

It is very probable that Eadburga used her influence with her infatuated husband, to prevent his doing justice to Prince Egbert, even if she had not been the original cause of his misfortunes; for every act of her life proves that her power was exerted to an evil end, and to offend her, or to stand in the way of her will or her interest was at once to create in her an implacable enemy. She exercised unlimited control over her hus-

<sup>1</sup> Speed.

<sup>2</sup> Hume



band, who opposed her in nothing, and allowed her absolute dominion in all the concerns of the kingdom. When other plans failed to revenge herself on those she considered her enemies, she had a means to which she did not hesitate to have recourse, namely, poison; and it is said, that on more than one occasion she availed herself of her dangerous knowledge of the property of drugs, to get rid of persons obnoxious to her. Her success in these modes of vengeance, was, however, destined, in the end, to cause her downfall, and "she fell into the pit which she had digged for another," as her mother Queen Quendrida had done before her.

Amongst the courtiers of Bertric was a young Ealdorman, named Worr, distinguished for worth of character and for accomplishments, to whom the King was extremely attached, and who had, in consequence, excited the jealous hatred of Eadburga. Having used every art to destroy her husband's confidence in his friend, she resolved to effect their separation by her customary method, in order to have no rival in the regard of Bertric. But she did not contemplate the event which occurred, and which at once deprived her of power and influence for ever.

At a repast, at which both Worr and the King were present, she presented the former with a cup, previously drugged by her own hand, of which he unsuspectingly drank, but at the same time, by an accident which she did not foresee, Bertric, taking the goblet from his friend, before she could prevent him, finished the remainder of the poison, and both, seized instantly with agony, expired before her eyes together.<sup>1</sup>

The King being dead, Eadburga, justly fearing the punishment she so well deserved, and knowing that she had incurred the hatred of the people, not only by this, but by many other crimes, without delay hastened to fly from the palace, and eventually contrived to make her escape into France, taking with her all the riches and treasures she had been able to secure. Eadburga, thus laden with precious gifts, presented herself before the French throne, and there, at first, her beauty and liberality procured for her a courteous reception; but the taunts and mockery by which she was afterwards repulsed, abundantly prove how soon the false Queen lost the esteem of her royal entertainer. Charlemagne was reminded by her presence, that her hand had been refused by the proud Mercian sovereign, her father, to his favourite son Charles. As if in retaliation, the monarch is said to have offered Eadburga, who was now a widow by her own act, the choice of either himself or his son, in these words:—

"Eadburga, say, which do you choose for your husband; myself, or my son, who now stands beside me?" To which the Queen, with characteristic levity, returned: "If I am to have my choice, I select your son, because he is the younger of the two." On which the great King, smiling, answered: "If you had chosen me, you should have had my son; but since you have preferred him, *you shall have neither.*"

Charlemagne, after thus venting the spleen he yet felt on the score of his early disappointment, seemed to relax in his enmity, and gave to Eadburga a splendid monastery, where she, exchanging her lay habit for that of a nun, presided, unworthy as she was, as abbess, during a few

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, Speed, Echard.

years.<sup>1</sup> Her evil disposition, however, unable to reconcile itself to this privacy, led her to conduct herself so ill in that capacity, that she was driven from her own establishment with infamy, and reduced to the attendance of one solitary female servant. Finally, Eadburga, daughter of the powerful Offa, who had once been "clothed in purple and fine linen," excluded from the society of all her former associates, was reduced to such a condition of miserable poverty and contempt, that, abandoned, shunned, and abhorred by all, she was forced to beg her daily bread in the streets of the city of Pavia, where she ended her days. Her case was publicly known, and many eye-witnesses attest these facts,<sup>2</sup> which are given on the authority of Alfred the Great to Asser.

The following epitaph was written for this Princess, and is here introduced more for its peculiar quaintness of expression,<sup>3</sup> than its appropriateness to one so burthened with crimes unalluded to therein :—

"I was, I am not; smiled, that since did weep;  
Labour'd, that rest; I wak'd, that now must sleep;  
I played, I play not; sung, that now am still;  
Saw, that am blind; I would, that have no will.  
I fed that, which feeds worms; I stood, I fell:  
I bade God save you, that now bid farewell.  
I felt, I feel not; followed, was pursued:  
I war'd, have peace; I conquer'd, am subdued.  
I moved, want motion; I was stiff, that bow  
Below the earth; then something, nothing now.  
I catch'd, am caught; I travel'd, here I lie;  
Lived in the world, that to the world now die."

So universal was the detestation in which the crimes of Eadburga were held by the West Saxons, that upon the death of Bertric, previous to their electing a new king, they made a law that no female should reign in their country, and forbidding the wives of their future monarchs to assume the title of Queen, on pain of their husbands being deposed.<sup>4</sup> In consequence of this law, Redburga, wife of Egbert, was deprived of the regal honours,<sup>5</sup> and also Osburga, Ethelwulf's first wife. Through its infringement in favour of Judith, his second consort, who was solemnly crowned, Ethelwulf had nearly been deprived of his kingdom and authority. The law remained in force till the reign of Edgar, after which it fell into neglect and ceased to be observed, the wives of the Saxon Kings being always styled Queens or Reginæ, and sharing with them in the coronation solemnity, being anointed, crowned, and sitting in the chair of state by their side; the particulars of which honours, derived thenceforth through their royal partners, are yet extant.<sup>6</sup>

Egbert, the eldest son of Alchmond, was, on Bertric's death, recalled from France, and being the sole surviving descendant of the race of the mighty Odin, became King of Wessex, and finally chief of the Saxon Heptarchy.

<sup>1</sup> Speed.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Heywood's History of Women.

<sup>4</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>5</sup> The King's wife bore the title of *hlafdig*, or lady. — Sim. Dunelm.

<sup>6</sup> Selden's Titles of Honour.

On comparing the conduct of the two sisters, Etheldritha and Eadburga, we are almost tempted to believe that the difference in their parentage, which some authors have asserted, really did exist, and that the former was not the daughter of Quendrida.

During the space of forty years, the gentle and unfortunate recluse Etheldritha lived at Croyland, in the exercise of every virtue, for which she became so revered, that her name was, after death, included in the saintly calendar. Hospitality, not the least feminine or least Christian virtue, was extended by her to the fugitive prince Witlaf,<sup>1</sup> when persecuted by King Egbert. Witlaf was sheltered by Etheldritha during a period of four months, in consequence of which circumstance he added to the privileges granted to the monastery by preceding kings, that of sanctuary within the five waters of Croyland. He also gave his purple coronation robe, "to be made into a cope for the use of the priest who ministered at the holy altar,"<sup>2</sup> and his golden veil, embroidered with the Fall of Troy, to be suspended against the walls at his anniversary or birthday; and besides these gifts, those of his gilt cup, embossed with figures of vine-dressers fighting with dragons, which he called his crucibulum, and the horn which he used at his table, for the elders of the monastery to drink out of at festivals, and to remember him in their prayers." This charter was dated A. D. 833. The worthy Abbess, on her death, was interred at Croyland, on which occasion the grief of Witlaf was so poignant that he could hardly be withdrawn from her tomb. As a still further testimony of his affection and regard for her memory, he caused his Queen Celfred, and their son Wimond, at their death, to be interred by her side.<sup>3</sup> But, as if the spirit of Ethelbert was still raging for vengeance on Offa's race, in the year 870, Croyland Monastery was ravaged by the Danes, who broke open all the tombs in hopes of plunder. "There were on the right hand of St. Gutlac's tomb, the monuments of Cissa, Beccelin and Abbot Siward; on the left, the tombs of Egbert, the secretary of Gutlac, St. Tatwine, St. Etheldritha, Queen Celfreda, and Wimond." Being disappointed of their object, these barbarians laid the bodies on a heap, and setting fire to them, burnt the church and convent together, three days after their arrival.<sup>4</sup> Previously to this desecration, Beornwulf, who became King on his brother Witlaf's death, A. D. 838, when marching through Croyland, had despoiled the monastery of all that Witlaf and the Mercian Kings had bestowed upon it, having seized on all the money he could find there, with a vast number of jewels and other ornaments bestowed for decorations on the church.<sup>5</sup> At a later period, the King, however, made restitution to Croyland for this robbery.<sup>6</sup>

Wimond, who had formerly married Elfleda, daughter of Kenulf, was deprived of his rights as heir to Witlaf, by his uncle Beornwulf: nor was this all. Beornwulf and his son Berferth together, concerted to put to

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes spelt Withlaf and Wightlaf.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale. <sup>3</sup> Willis's Abbeyes.

<sup>4</sup> Dugdale, Willis, Ingulphus.

<sup>5</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>6</sup> He died 852, and during his reign, which lasted thirteen years, the name of his consort, Queen Sethred, accompanied by the title Regina, was frequently appended to his in the royal charters granted to the church of Worcester; an additional proof that the law made in Wessex did not affect the other Queens of the Heptarchy.



death Wistan, son of Wimond and Elfleda, an amiable and pious prince, who, led by his disposition to religion, left his affairs, on Witlaf's death, in the hands of his mother, who is esteemed a queen by our writers, and of his nobles. Berferth, knowing Elfleda's hand would convey a strong title to the sovereign power, sought her for his wife, though in reality his aunt by relationship.<sup>1</sup>

In conformity with this plan, Berferth sent his messengers to ask the Queen's hand in marriage. Elfleda, however, was utterly unconscious of the perfidious plot of her pretended lover, and deferred sending any answer till she had consulted with her son and the nobles of the land.

Wistan was accordingly requested to give an opinion respecting the proposed match, when he gave the following answer:—

"My dearest mother, bear in mind that Berferth, who now seeks you as a wife, is both my cousin and your gossip; that he who received me at the sacred font of baptism, was as my father to a new generation unto life. Attend but to my counsels, and you shall be given to a husband that will never die; for those who marry themselves unto Christ, and accept Him as their bridegroom, shall receive as their dowry a glorious principality in the kingdom of heaven."

"Let it be as you have said, my son," replied the Queen; "I will never wed Berferth, nor any mortal man."

Wistan, assured by his mother of her determination to pass the remnant of her days in virtuous widowhood, revealed to the messengers of Berferth the canonical impediments to any marriage between that prince and the Queen.

Berferth, on receiving the answer to his matrimonial proposition, resolved on vengeance, to effect which occupied his entire thoughts. Under the pretence of peace and affection, he sent to invite the young Prince, his godson, to an interview, who, suspecting no injury, came, with his attendants, unarmed to the spot appointed, called, to this day, "Winstanstow." Thither Berferth also repaired with his followers, but they were all privately armed. At meeting, Berferth, taking the Prince a short distance from his friends, requested permission to embrace him as his godson. "Approach, my son," said he, "and bestow upon me the kiss of peace." Wistan on this walked towards him, saying, "In the name of Holy Peace, that which is God himself, I kiss thee, so that in His name I may be kissed by thee." Berferth, who had at that moment no respect for his King, or regard for the laws of God, stealthily drew his sword, and striking the Prince on his head, while in the act of embracing him, he shattered the skull to pieces, while one of his followers ran the royal victim through the body with a sword. The rest of the young King's attendants were also put to death. This crime was perpetrated June 1st, 849; but the judgment of Heaven fell on Berferth for the deed, who, even on the spot, was seized, it is said, with a raging madness, so that he was never permitted by God either to marry the Queen, or mount to the throne which he desired.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Capgrave.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning St. Wistan, consult William of Malmesbury, book ii., ch. 13; and Harleian MS., 2253, *De Martyrio S. Wistani*. He is commemorated on June 1st.



## QUENDRIDA II.

The grand-daughter of Offa's Queen—Her great abilities and the high position she holds in the state—She is left guardian to her young brother Kenelm—Her sister Burganilda attached to the young King—His tutor Ascobert—The traitorous designs of Quendrida on the life of Kenelm—Ascobert agrees to aid her plans—Kenelm's dream—His uneasiness—He informs his nurse, who interprets it—Aware of his danger, he removes to a secure place—The Castle of Kenilworth chosen as his abode—The family of the Kenelms—The hunting excursion to Clint Wood—The murder of the young Prince, and concealment of his body in a pit—Quendrida mounts the throne—Is suspected by the people—Driven from the government, which is given to her uncle Kenulf—She assumes a religious habit, but retains her patrimony, the Abbey of Winchcomb—Touching legend of the revelation at Rome of the death of Kenelm—Discovery of the body—Canonization of the murdered Prince—Chapel built—Quendrida's scorn—The judgment of Heaven on her—Her death.

THE name of Quendrida is unfortunate in its repute; for Quendrida, the grand-daughter of the guilty Queen of Offa, inherited the bad qualities of the degraded Queen who disgraced the high lineage of Charlemagne, which she claimed.

Elfreda, daughter of Offa and Quendrida, after the death of Ethelred, King of Northumberland, had united herself to Kenulf of Mercia, fourth in descent from Wibba, the father of the warlike Penda. Kenulf had succeeded to young Egbert's short reign, and soon became distinguished by the virtue and piety of his conduct. By her marriage with Kenulf, Elfreda had three children, Quendrida, Burganilda, and Kenelm. Another daughter of Kenulf, named Brenna, became Queen of the Picts, but it does not appear whether she was also his daughter by Elfreda, or some former consort.

Even during the lifetime of Kenulf, the Princess Quendrida took her seat in the witenagemote of Mercia; so that it is probable that either some principality had devolved on her by inheritance through her mother, or by gift of her father, or else she was indebted for the honour of a place in the council to her father's partiality and her own talents. In the witenagemote held in London, in 811, Elfreda, her mother, and Quendrida, were both present, as appears from the signatures, among which is that of Quendrida, who styles herself "the King's daughter."

From this fact of Quendrida having been honoured with a seat in the State councils of her father's reign, she must have early entered into, and become acquainted with power, and learned to love that dominion which she afterwards abused.

A monument of Kenulf's piety arose in a stately abbey, at Winch-

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<sup>1</sup> Palgrave.

comb, in Gloucestershire, the Mercian capital. Kenulf, at his death, was interred within its sacred walls. He had reigned twenty-four years, and died a natural death, a circumstance worthy of record in those days, leaving his crown to his young son Kenelm. This is recorded in the following quaint lines:—

“In the foure and twentithe yere of his kyngedom  
Kenulfe went out of this worlde and to the joye of hevene com;  
It was after that oure lord in his moder alyghte,  
Eigte hondred yer and neygentene, by a countes rigte,  
Seinte Kenelm, his yonge sone, in his sevende yere  
Kyng was ymad after him, they he yong were.”<sup>1</sup>

On his deathbed Kenulf had besought his eldest daughter Quendrida to take charge of the young Kenelm, his heir, then, as these lines assure us, only seven years of age.<sup>2</sup> In thus entrusting the infant King to Quendrida, Kenulf overlooked the more amiable Burganilda, his younger daughter, and made a false estimate of the character of his children. They were, indeed, very different in disposition; for though the aged King might esteem Quendrida, by her abilities, more competent to fulfil the duties of guardian to her brother, Burganilda is said to have loved the little Kenelm with a sister's affection, even to his life's end;<sup>3</sup> while the ambitious Princess Quendrida planned only how to get rid of the innocent child, who was an obstacle in her path to the sovereignty.<sup>4</sup> The heinous crime which the Mercian Princess apparently meditated from the first, is the more appalling from the exceedingly amiable character of the little King, her brother, which very early disposed him to acts of piety and virtue.<sup>5</sup>

Quendrida began her scheme by attempting to destroy Kenelm by poison, and for that purpose caused a strong draught to be prepared, which she offered to him with her own hand, but it failed to take the effect she had anticipated, so that for this time she was foiled of her intention.

Ascobert, tutor or personal guardian of the young Kenelm, had long beheld Quendrida with a lover's admiration. This man the Princess corrupted from his duty, by the gift of a large sum of money, and a promise that she would favour his suit. As this would render Ascobert the sharer with Quendrida in the regal power, he undertook to put his young charge to death.<sup>6</sup>

About this period the monkish chroniclers inform us that the young King, having fallen asleep, dreamt a miraculous dream. He saw a tree stand by his bedside, and “the height thereof touched heaven, and it shined as bright as gold, and had fair branches full of blossoms and fruit. And on every branch of this tree were tapers of wax burning and lamps alight, which was a glorious sight to behold; and he thought that he climbed upon the tree, and Ascobert, his governor stood beneath and

<sup>1</sup> Vita S. Kenelmi, MS. Coll. Trin. Oxon. No. 57, Arch.

<sup>2</sup> Caxton, Holinshed, Palgrave, Butler, Speed; Brit. Sancta.

<sup>3</sup> Langhornii Chron.

<sup>4</sup> Brit. Sancta.

<sup>5</sup> Caxton.

<sup>6</sup> Brit. Sancta, Palgrave, Lingard.

hewed down this tree he stood on; and when this tree was fallen down, the holy young King was heavy and sorrowful, and he thought there came a fair bird which flew up to heaven with great joy."

Kenelm, on awaking, in much wonder, related this dream to his nurse Wolwelyn, who, on hearing it, was much grieved, and interpreted it to signify that his sister and the traitor Ascobert had falsely conspired his death; "for," said she, "he hath promised Quendrida to slay thee, and it signifieth that he smiteth down the tree that stood by thy bedside, and the bird that thou sawest fly up to heaven, signifieth thy soul, that angels shall bear up to heaven after thy martyrdom."<sup>1</sup>

Whether any previous observations of the nurse had led her thus to interpret the dream of the young Prince, or whether a supernatural power of divine inspiration, as is asserted, guided her in this interpretation, her admonition was not thrown away on her young charge, who betook himself forthwith to a more secure place of abode. To this circumstance is to be ascribed the first foundation of the noble structure of Kenilworth, a word which literally means King Helme, or Kenelm, his "wearth" or "place of safety."<sup>2</sup> That the young monarch resided there, is plain from the remainder of the particulars of his sad history, which all connect themselves with the immediate neighbourhood. The residence of Kenelm<sup>3</sup> continued to be a royal palace till the reign of Henry III., who granted it to a member of the Kenelm family, "in whose family," says Weever, "it is thought to be continued at this day, in the person of Lord Clinton." He subjoins a curious article on the name of Kenelm, and asserts that all the persons in whose name the word Helme is compounded, of whom he gives a list, were originally of one family.

The youth and innocent life of Kenelm did not, however, influence the feelings of his treasonable guardian. The fatal catastrophe soon arrived. One day Ascobert, pretending to take him out on a hunting excursion, led him astray into a wood, named Clent,<sup>4</sup> where he fell an easy victim. After cutting off his head, the murderer drew the body into a great valley, between two high hills, where he dug a deep pit, into which he threw the royal corpse, and laid the head upon it.<sup>5</sup> This deed accomplished, Asco-

<sup>1</sup> Caxton's Golden Legend.

<sup>2</sup> Weever's Ancient Funeral Monuments.

<sup>3</sup> "King Helme, his home" (Sax.), was at one time united to the see of Hereford. Kenilworth, according to Dugdale, was an ancient demesne of the crown, and had in the Saxon times within its precincts a castle, which stood upon a place called Holme Hill.

<sup>4</sup> Caxton's Golden Legend; Langhornii Chron.

<sup>5</sup> A MS. Psalter presented to Queen Mary, in 1553, by Baldwin Smith, a citizen of London, contains the representation of Kenelm, King of Mercia, hunting with his attendants. There is a difference of opinion among authors as to whether accident or design caused the death of the young King; and Malmesbury, who inclines to the former opinion, concisely informs us that his sister Quendrida, without any malicious intention, was the innocent occasion of his death, without, however, relating the particulars of the accident. More modern authors accuse Quendrida of the crime. According to the MS. Psalter, which contains the picture referred to, he was murdered August 16, A. D. 819, and the illuminator agreed with the opinion that Quendrida was author of the crime. A second engraving from the MS. Psalter represents the regicides in the act of throwing the dead body of the King into a pit.—*Strutt*.



bert returned to claim his promised reward from the partner of his guilt. It does not, however, appear that he received any share of the administration, though he became the accepted lover of the guilty Quendrida, who, overjoyed at her success, lost no time in assuming the regal dignity, and at the same time commanded that, upon pain of death, no man should speak of the unfortunate Kenelm. The Queen, thus arrived at the summit of her guilty ambition, was, nevertheless, watched by a Power higher than any on earth. Suspicion had naturally attached itself to her of being author of the late King's death, as the only person benefited by it, but as yet no one dared to accuse her. Still the Mercians disdained the government of a female as much as the West Saxons, and having had an instance of the deposal of a queen by that nation, in the excellent but inefficient Sexburga, wife of Cenwalch, were not slow in availing themselves of the precedent. They accordingly deprived Quendrida of the authority she had usurped, and for which she had not hesitated to shed the innocent blood of her own brother, and placed upon the throne, in her stead, her uncle Ceolwulf.<sup>1</sup>

On this event Quendrida testified some signs of contrition, whether sincere or otherwise, by assuming a nun's habit. Although she had lost her crown, she still retained her patrimonial inheritance, the Abbey of Winchelcomb, bequeathed to her by her father, over which she now assumed the government. She could only have kept the supreme power a very short time, for the death of her father Kenulf, and accession of Kenelm, are fixed in the year 819; and Ceolwulf, who, succeeded herself, and reigned *two years*, must also have begun to reign at the same date, for he was deposed in 821, by Beornwulf, a Mercian, whose only title to the crown was opulence and power. If, however, as Holinshed tells us, Ceolwulf did not mount the throne till 823, the length of Quendrida's reign would be extended by several years.

After her deposition, Quendrida is frequently mentioned in the English councils with the titles of "Abbess" and "Heiress of Kenulf." That she was a nun at the time of the Council of Cloveshoe, appears also from one of them. She was, however, compelled by King Beornwulf to compound with Wulfred, Archbishop of Canterbury, for the land which her father had wrested from him.<sup>2</sup>

The death of the ill-fated Kenelm has formed the favourite theme of many a monkish chronicler, and given birth to the following touching legend. His fate had been revealed at Rome by the appearance of a white dove, which alighted on the altar of St. Peter's, when the Pope was at mass, and let fall from its beak a scroll, on which were inscribed, the following words in letters of gold:—"In Clent, in Cowbage, Kenelme, kynge born, lyeth under a thorne, his head off-shorne." Mass being over, the Pope showed the scroll to the people, but no one present except an Englishman, could inform him of its meaning. On which he sent an embassy to England, to Archbishop Wulfred and the clergy, desiring that the spot called Cowbage, in the wood of Clent, named in the scroll, should be searched throughout. The papal mandate was obeyed, and

<sup>1</sup> Lingard.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



the result was the discovery of the body of the young King. It follows that many miracles are said to have attended the discovery of his holy relics. The legend goes on to tell how a white cow was instrumental in directing attention to the spot so much sought for. "This cow belonged to a poor widow, and being daily driven into Clent Wood, was used to find its way to the valley where Kenelm was buried, and though it remained without nourishment throughout the whole day, at night returned with the other animals in better condition than they, and would yield more milk."<sup>1</sup> The name of Cowbage had been given to the valley in consequence, and the fact had become so well known, that the Archbishop and his friends found the place without difficulty.

The people of Mercia dared not remove the body, for fear of Quendrída's anger; but the Archbishop and his friends, less scrupulous, transferred the mangled remains of the murdered monarch with great solemnity to the Abbey of Winchcomb, where they were enshrined, and from that time treated as those of a saint; Kenelm being shortly after canonized by the supreme Pontiff.<sup>2</sup> The record proceeds in the true spirit of

<sup>1</sup> Caxton.

<sup>2</sup> The Chapel of St. Kenelm is mentioned by Nash in his History of Worcester, as an ancient structure on the south-east side of Clent Hill, in the parish of Hales Owen, an insulated district belonging to Shropshire, although part of the chapel-yard is said to be in Staffordshire: the author remarks, "It is no easy matter to reconcile the tradition of the place (which fixes the spot where the murder was committed, and the body first interred at Cowback or Cowdale, within the parish of Clent), with the legendary account of it; for the legend affirms that a spring of water gushed out on the discovery of the royal infant's body. Now, in the field still called Cowbeck there is no spring of water, and yet not only long tradition has determined that for the spot where Kenelm was murdered, but the words above cited [one version of the legend runs: "In Clent Cow-batche, Kenelme, king bearne, lyeth under a thorne, heaved and bereaved."] point it out expressly to have been in Clent Cowback. [Both Higden and Butler say that Cowdale Pasture, where the well was situated, was in the south part of Staffordshire, on the borders of Worcestershire.] At the east end of St. Kenelm's Chapel is a fine and plentiful spring, and, till of late years, there was a well (now, indeed, filled up) handsomely coped with stone, and much resorted to, both before and since the Reformation, by the superstitious vulgar for the cure of sore eyes and other maladies. This well is mentioned in a court-roll of Romsley Manor, second of Edward IV., when the jury present "*quod Johanna Haye occupat cennatarium et fontem St. Kenelmi, &c.*" Now, unless we suppose that the site of the present chapel was the ancient Cowback, and the limits of Clent since contracted into a narrower compass (for both the chapel and spring, together with part of the cemetery, are now within the manor of Romsley and parish of Hales Owen), we must either entirely reject the legend, supported as it is by the remains of the holy well and the chapel, which still bears the name of St. Kenelm's, and affords besides a very ancient specimen of rude Saxon sculpture over the south door, corresponding with that early age; or else we must adhere to the traditional spot of his murder and interment, the present Cowback; and in that case it will be difficult to account for the holy well, and the erecting of the chapel at the distance of near a mile from the true place of interment."

"My opinion on this obscure point is, that Kenelm was murdered in the field now called Cowback, but the corpse was buried in or adjoining to the site of the present chapel, on the erecting of which, to the honour of this royal youth (who was soon after canonized for a saint), and the great resort of persons who came thither to make their offerings at his altar, the artful priest who officiated there,

monkish credulity, "That when the saint's body was brought to the abbey, the bells sounded without the help of man, and rung of their own accord. Quendrida, the abbess, hearing the noise then inquired, 'What all this ringing meant?' whereupon she was informed that the body of her brother Kenelm was being brought into the abbey; to which she answered scornfully, 'That is as true as both mine eyen ben falle upon this boke.' And on this, beholding with indignation a solemn procession of clergy and people pass by her window to honour his funeral, she took up her Psalter, and read, as it were, against him the imprecation of the 108th Psalm, in which, when she had proceeded as far as that verse, 'This is the work of them who defame me to the Lord, and who speak evil against my soul,' her eyes suddenly fell out of her head upon the very verse she was reading, and stained the book with her blood. Quendrida's primer was kept for a testimony of this miracle, in the Abbey of Winchcomb, till the dissolution of that house, it still retaining the marks of her blood." Not long after the Abbess-Queen expired most wretchedly, and her body unhonoured by funeral pomp, was cast forth, to use the words of the legend, "into a foul mire:" and who is there that reads the record of Quendrida's crimes and their deserved punishment, but must regard the death of the young Kenelm as enviable in comparison, and perceive that, even on this earth, there is a retributive justice awarded to the guilty!

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finding a spring of water in the chapel-yard, which might possibly have some medicinal virtue in it, most likely trumped up this tale, which, in those days of ignorance and superstition, easily met with credit, and thereby drew a still greater number of persons hither, in hopes to find a cure for their bodies as well as their souls.

"With regard to the fabric, no part of it except the south door appears older than Henry the Third's time, and I am rather inclined to think it of later date; but the arch and columns of the south door are undoubtedly part of the old Saxon chapel which was erected here soon after the discovery of King Kenelm's body.

"As this chapel was never privileged with the right of sepulture, no monuments or inscriptions occur, nor are there any arms or other ornaments in the windows. The tower is a very elegant piece of Gothic architecture, and rudely adorned with niches and pinnacles.

"On the outside of the chapel wall, fronting the south, is carved a rude figure of a child, with two fingers of the right hand lifted up in the ancient form of giving the benediction. Above the head of the figure is carved a crown, which projects several inches from the wall. No doubt the whole was meant for a representation of St. Kenelm." [Nash's *Worcestershire*, copied from *Antiquities of Shropshire*: see also in Nash's work, p. 107, and in *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lxxii. p. 1177, a picture of the Chapel of St. Kenelm.]

## OSBURGA AND ETHELSWYTHA,

### QUEENS OF ETHELWULF AND BURHRED.

The mother of Alfred the Great—Earl Oslac, her father, cup-bearer to King Ethelwulf—Wars with the Danes—The King first intended for the Church—His choice of the cup-bearer's daughter—Her virtues and industry—Needlework of the Anglo-Saxon ladies—The five sons of Osburga—Her daughter Ethelswytha married to the King of Mercia—The title of Queen revived—The Danes overrun Mercia—Subdue Burhred, and force him to abandon his country—He dies at Rome—His Queen follows him, and dies on the road—Alfred's infancy—Prayer of Osburga—The story of the illuminated book of Saxon verse—The children's anxiety—Alfred's resolution and success—The pilgrimage to Rome of Ethelwulf, accompanied by his young son—Uncertainty respecting Osburga—Ethelwulf's return with Judith, the French princess—Death of Osburga.

No biography could be more interesting than that of the mother of the great Alfred, the most endeared monarch of the Anglo-Saxon race; a true hero, whose deeds are authenticated, and who is not a visionary object of the admiration of posterity, like the renowned champion, King Arthur, of romantic celebrity. Unfortunately, too little of her to whom Alfred owed his existence is known. Osburga was the daughter of Earl Oslac, a descendant of Whitgar, the nephew of Cerdic; consequently her station, though inferior to that of the monarch whose wife she became, was dignified, and her birth equal. Her father Oslac filled the post of cup-bearer to King Ethelwulf, which was one only entrusted to a personage of great fidelity, and in whom the utmost confidence could be placed. This was important in an age when poison was so frequently resorted to by enemies, to rid themselves of those they dreaded or hated.

Ethelwulf had succeeded to the kingdom of Wessex after the death of his celebrated father Egbert, who had had to wage continual war with those redoubted invaders the Northmen, and, though often victorious, left his kingdom still threatened by them on every side. Ethelwulf's character was by no means warlike: he had been educated by a priest, Swithun or Swithin, of Winchester,<sup>1</sup> and had even, it is said, taken the post of sub-deacon of the same church when he was called to the throne. His life of seclusion probably rendered him, at the beginning of his reign, little ambitious, and he was content to choose as his wife, instead of some foreign princess of higher pretensions, the good and pious Osburga, the daughter of his cup-bearer, whom he had probably opportunities of knowing and esteeming.

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<sup>1</sup> William of Malmesbury.



As Osburga is never named by historians as remarkable for personal attractions, her merit, no doubt, recommended her to the notice of the sovereign; her "industry," as well as her piety, is, however, the theme of all the chroniclers;<sup>1</sup> and from the few anecdotes which have been handed down respecting her, there is reason to suppose that she, like many princesses who preceded her, was acquainted with literature, which, at that time had attained a very remarkable height of excellence, owing to the exertions of learned churchmen.<sup>2</sup> It would have been interesting to posterity, if the writers, who mention Queen Osburga's diligence, had described some of the elaborate work which occupied her leisure; such performances being considered so important, that a minute account of them was not looked upon as beneath the dignity of history. There have come down to us many charming and curious specimens of Saxon art in the form of needlework,<sup>3</sup> of which details are given; and from the talent in the family of Osburga, her own may be surmised. We know that some of her great-grandchildren, daughters of Edward the Elder, were particularly noted for their skill in this feminine accomplishment, and that her piety also was inherited in an eminent degree by her children.

Queen Osburga had five sons,<sup>4</sup> all of whom, except the first, who died in infancy, successively wore the English crown after their father's death. The youngest of these princes was born A. D. 849, at Wanating, or Wantage,<sup>5</sup> a royal manor-house of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs, where Osburga was at that time residing. This child, no other than he who was afterwards known as Alfred the Great, seems from his earliest infancy, to have awakened the tenderest interest in those around him, especially of his fond parents, whose favorite he is reported to have been. As soon as the Prince was old enough to receive the instructions of any preceptor, he was consigned by his mother to the care of St. Swithin,<sup>6</sup> then Bishop of Winchester.

Besides the five sons of Osburga, she had a daughter named Ethel-swytha,<sup>7</sup> who was probably one of the eldest-born of her children: she was married to Burhred, King of Mercia, who had solicited the aid of her father against the refractory Britons, then under Roderick the Great, ravaging his kingdom. The powerful King Ethelwulf, joining his forces with those of Burhred, however, compelled the Britons to obedience; and the marriage of Ethelswytha took place at Chippenham, in Wilt-

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave, Turner, Kemble.

<sup>2</sup> Asser calls Osburga "*foemina nobilis, ingenis, nobilio et genera.*"

<sup>3</sup> Standards were woven by Danish ladies, of which strange marvels are related by Asser.

<sup>4</sup> Bayle, Raleigh.

<sup>5</sup> In Berkshire.

<sup>6</sup> Spelman.

<sup>7</sup> The names of Saxon women were generally significant of some circumstance in their own destiny, or the history of their family. Thus, Æthelswytha signified *very noble*; Selethrytha, *a good threatener*; Elfhilda, *the elf of battle*; Beage, *the bracelet*; Ethelfritha, *noble and powerful*; Adeleve, *the noble wife*; Eadburh, *the happy pledge*; Heaburge, *tall as a castle*; Eadfed, *the happy pregnancy*; Adelfeda, *the noble pregnancy*; Ælfgiva, *the elf-favour*; Eadgifa, *the happy gift*; Æthelgifa, *the noble gift*; Wynfreda, *the peace of man*; Æthelheld, *the noble war-goddess*; Ælfthyth, *threatening as an elf*. [Turner.]



shire, with great pomp and rejoicing, during the festival of Easter,—the union being a highly popular one.

It was on this occasion that both Ethelswytha and her mother Osburga received the title of Queen, and were allowed all the honours and dignities annexed to the rank, forfeited through the crimes of Eadburga, daughter of Offa, King of Mercia, and since then not accorded, by the Saxon law, to the wives of their sovereigns.<sup>1</sup> Ethelswytha afterwards subscribed her name, in conjunction with her husband, in the manner exemplified in the Old Register, at Worcester, as “Ethelswyth Regina.” This Queen also affords rather a singular instance of a Queen of England being permitted by law, in that day, as at present, to give a contract as a *femme sole*. In the Chartulerie of the Abbey of Abingdon, she alone bestows lands, by charter, to Cuthwulf, her servant.

Ethelswytha shared her husband's subordinate throne for twenty-two years; at the end of which time the still-encroaching Danes, removing from Lindsay to Repton-upon-Trent, took up their quarters there for the winter, and compelled Burhred to fly from his dominions, which they farmed out to Kilwulf, one of Burhred's household servants, contingent on his surrendering it to them at command. All Mercia was now overrun by the Danes, under their King Healfdene; their insolence, increased with their successes, and their ravages and cruelties were extreme. Burhred, unable further to contend with such foes, left his kingdom, and sought an asylum at Rome, where he died very shortly after his arrival, and was buried in the church of Santa Maria, belonging to the Saxon

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<sup>1</sup> Osburga herself was the second queen who had been denied the privileges of royalty in Wessex; neither enjoying the royal title, nor the seat by her husband's side in the chair of state, which probably encouraged an idea of her birth being ignoble. [Speed.] The first who suffered from the crimes of her predecessor by this diminution of the dignity usually accorded to the queenly state, was Redburga, wife of Egbert, and mother of Ethelwulf, who during the long period of thirty years, in which her husband governed Wessex, never was permitted to assume the title and state of the queen-consort. It would have been strange indeed if Ethelwulf had insisted on these grants in favour of his wife which the people had refused to his mother, who, for aught we know, might have been yet alive when Osburga became his queen. The character of Redburga, however, differed very much indeed from that of her pious and gentle daughter-in-law; she is, in fact, compared, by one of our old writers, to Jezebel, for inciting her husband Egbert, to whom the title Ahab is applied, to one of the most remarkable steps of his reign, by which she proved she possessed the influence over her husband, denied in the honours she ought to have received, though exerted in a bad cause.

At Redburga's suggestion, Egbert forbade the Welsh, on pain of death, to come beyond Offa's dyke, the boundary between England and Wales. This edict commanded that all the Britons, or Welsh, should, with their wives and children, depart out of their lands, cities, towns, and castles, in England, “to Wild Walshe above Offa ditch,” and also to Cornwall, Scotland, and Ireland. After which edict (issued about A. D. 766) had been complied with, Egbert gave the land the name of England.

The above deed is attributed to a desire to gain over the territories of the Britons into their own possession, and the writer styles the Saxon King Egbert “cruel,” and his Queen Redburga “his cruel and covetous wife.” [Oliver Mathew's Abbreviation of divers true and auncient Britaine Chronicles.]

school.<sup>1</sup> Ethelswytha, who had not at first accompanied her husband, whom she hoped some fortunate revolution would eventually restore to his throne, finding that no chance of the ascendancy of his better fortune remained, determined to join him in his exile; and we learn from the Saxon Chronicle, that in the year 888 she set out on her pilgrimage for that purpose, accompanied by the Ealdorman Beeke, who carried with him the alms of King Alfred, and of the people of Wessex, to the city of Rome. It was not destined that Ethelswytha should reach the goal she sought, for she was taken ill and died on the way. She was interred either at Pavia or Ticino.<sup>2</sup> Such was the history of the only daughter of Ethelwulf and Osburga.

Osburga, after her daughter's marriage, which probably took place when she was extremely young, devoted herself to the care of her sons; and of her is told the charming anecdote, so often repeated, and so full of touching interest, of her exciting her youngest boy to learn.

It is recorded that Osburga was one day seated in the chamber with her children, holding in her hand an illuminated book of Saxon poetry<sup>3</sup> (how precious would be the volume, could it be recovered!), which the brothers were eagerly looking over. Observing their admiration, and taking advantage of it, their mother observed, playfully, "Whichever of you shall first learn this book, shall have it as a gift." All were delighted at the idea, Alfred, the youngest, in particular, who, looking up into her eyes, gravely asked her if she were really in earnest. She assured him that she meant what she said, as she desired to see her sons learned men. Upon this the child begged that the book might be entrusted to him to carry to his master, and he shortly after returned with it, able to recite all the poems it contained. Of course the beautiful prize was awarded by the gratified Osburga, who hailed this first indication of her favourite son's perseverance<sup>4</sup> with maternal delight!

Alfred required all a mother's care in his early life, as he was afflicted with a painful malady from an infant; and many were the vows offered up for his recovery at various shrines. Osburga's prayers, at a certain church in Cornwall, were supposed to have, at length, relieved him of his complaint to a great extent. As his health, however, was always delicate,

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Ingulph.

<sup>3</sup> Writing books, as a monastic employment, was usual in the earliest times. Among British monks, David had a study, or writing-room, and began the Gospel of St. John, in golden letters, with his own hands. The Anglo-Saxon artists possessed eminent skill in the execution of their books, and the character which they used had the honour of giving rise to the modern small beautiful Roman letter.

In the statutes of the regular canons are two verses, specifying that they had simple girdles, tablets, combs, needles, thread, a style, paper or parchment, ink, and a pen-case. Du Cange mentions a singular kind of scribes, called Biodiatores, who wrote books and letters in the manner of embroiderers, so lightly representing the object that it almost escaped the sight.

The custom of carrying a pen behind the ear is ancient. In the Life of St. Odo is the following passage: "He saw a pen sticking above his ear, in the manner of a writer." — Fosbrooke's British Monachism.

<sup>4</sup> This anecdote is sometimes told of Judith, the step-mother of Alfred.

it might have been the cause of his father resolving to make him the partner of his pilgrimage to Rome, though the child was then only five years of age, and the charge of him must have been a most anxious one. Osburga saw him depart, no doubt, with painful hope; and the result of her husband's journey, however happy for her son, showed that her presentiment of evil was but too well founded as regarded herself.

It is unexplained for what reason, at this time Osburga appears no longer to share the throne of Ethelwulf; whether they parted in fulfilment of some vow, common at this period, which might have had reference to the health of Alfred, or whether, as was equally common, she was repudiated, that her husband might be at liberty to marry the Princess Judith, of France, remains in uncertainty. Some writers have asserted that, though no longer acknowledged Queen, Osburga, after this marriage, resumed her duties, and superintended the education of her children,<sup>1</sup> which is not impossible, as the new Queen was only twelve years old, but is little probable.

Asser, the contemporary and friend of Alfred, wrote his biography, yet, strangely enough, he tells nothing of the remaining history of Osburga. That she died before her favorite son became king is certain, and it is most likely before the death of her husband; but this is left to conjecture, though some assert that it was to divert his grief for her loss that the pilgrimage to Rome of Ethelwulf was undertaken.<sup>2</sup>

Her tomb was shown at Coventry, where her memory was cherished, and she was canonized as a saint, according to the custom of the day. From this circumstance it may be thought that she retired into a convent, and died in the odour of sanctity.

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<sup>1</sup> Lappenberg.

<sup>2</sup> Leland calls her St. Osburga, and her death has been stated as happening in 855.

## JUDITH OF FRANCE,

### SECOND QUEEN OF ETHELWULF

Motives of Ethelwulf for his visits to the Court of Charles the Bald — Beauty of the Princess Judith — Attachment of Count Baldwin of Flanders — Ethelwulf's offer accepted — Splendid Marriage of Judith to Ethelwulf — Royal presents — Ethelwulf takes his bride to England — They are ill received — Ealstan, Bishop of Sherburne, excites Ethelbald to rebellion — Offence given to the Church — Ethelwulf proclaims Judith Queen, in despite of opposition — Ethelwulf yields to his son to avoid bloodshed — Judith crowned — Prayers on the occasion — Alfred and his young mother-in-law study together in retirement — Ethelwulf's death — Ethelbald forcibly marries his widow — Displeasure of the people and the clergy — He becomes penitent — Separates from Judith — She sells her dower, and travels, on her return to her father's court, through Flanders — Meeting of Judith and Baldwin — Consequences of her stay — Anger of Charles the Bald — She is placed in a convent — Rescued by her brothers — Elopes with Baldwin — Enmity and final forgiveness of the French King — The children of Judith — Matilda, wife of William of Normandy — Ballad of the imaginary adventures of the "King's Daughter."

It has been already related that Ethelwulf made a pilgrimage to Rome, taking the capital of France on his way, both as he went and as he returned, with his young son Alfred.

The beautiful Princess Judith might have attracted his visit on the second occasion, as policy had directed his first. His piety led him to all the celebrated shrines throughout the country, and there were few churches at which he did not offer up his vows. He passed a year in Rome, not only in pious exercises, but in viewing all the remains of the former glory of the Imperial City, even then filled with the ruins of its greatness.

Probably the acquaintance he then made with the habits of foreign nations, and the desire to see his own country improved in learning and civilization, might be his inducement to the step he afterwards took in uniting himself with foreign interests. If Osburga were still living it is difficult to reconcile his conduct with his former attachment to the mother of his children.

When, in 855, the English king arrived at the court of Charles the Bald, accompanied by his youngest son, Alfred, then in his sixth year, the Princess Judith, his destined mother-in-law, was only between eleven and twelve years of age. No overtures were, however, at that period made respecting the French Princess, but on Ethelwulf's departure from the court of her father, the train of the royal pilgrims was attended, by his orders, with a truly regal retinue of Frenchmen to the borders of his realm.

Ethelwulf, having arrived at the Imperial City, had the satisfaction



of presenting to the Pope the valuable gifts he brought thither for his acceptance. Alfred had, young as he was, already paid one visit to Rome, having been sent there by his father to be consecrated King by the Sovereign Pontiff. On that occasion Leo had received the little English Prince as his own adopted son, and the gifts now offered by Ethelwulf to the Pope were intended as an acknowledgment of his personal gratitude for the Pope's generous behaviour towards his favourite child. These articles consisted of a crown of pure gold, weighing four pounds, two golden tassels called *Bancas*, a sword adorned with pure gold, two golden images, and four Saxon dishes of silver gilt; besides this there were several gorgeous dresses. These various presents are enumerated by Anastasius, a contemporary of Ethelwulf. Besides these offerings to the Pope, Ethelwulf made a perpetual grant of three hundred mancuses<sup>1</sup> or marks per annum to the Roman See, one-third of which sum was to be appropriated by the Pope, another to the support of the lamps of St. Peter, and the residue for the lamps of St. Paul's. A donation in gold was likewise presented to all the Roman clergy and nobles, and one in silver to the people.<sup>2</sup> The English King remained twelve months at Rome, during which he rebuilt the Saxon school which had been founded by his predecessor Ina, King of the West Saxons, and which, through the carelessness of some English residents, had the year before been destroyed by fire; and as a proof of the humane disposition of this King towards the English, it is deserving of mention here, that when he learnt it was customary for public penitents and exiles to be bound with iron, he obtained an order from the Pope that no Englishman should be put into bonds for penance.

Ethelwulf revisited the court of France in the month of July, 856, and it was then that he became a suitor for the hand of the beautiful Judith. Young, however, as this Princess was, she had already become an object of interest in the eyes of one who was by nature gifted with rare personal endowments, possessed of ambition, and capable of the highest undertakings. Baldwin of Flanders, or "the Forester," was as much distinguished by his courage as by his strength of arm, from which he was surnamed the Iron-Arm or Iron-Hand; he was of tall and noble stature, and his countenance beautiful. He had entered the field for the first time under the command of Charles the Bald, in the war that King had undertaken against the Saracens, who had invaded the borders of

<sup>1</sup> The value of a Saxon *mancus* or *meare* was thirty pence, and it was equal to six shillings of their money, though, about A.D. 1194, it rose to the value of thirteen shillings. That the Saxons coined gold money is certain, and the *mancus* was their only piece of gold. They were accustomed to reckon by the pound, the shilling, and the *mancus*. The *mancus* was about the weight of our present half-crown. — Spelman, *Account of Gold and Silver Coins*. Asser does not say whether they were mancuses of gold or silver. Hoveden calls them mancuses of silver pennies.

<sup>2</sup> In the Camere of Raphael, in the Sistine chapel at the Vatican, among the pictures of princes who have been benefactors to the Holy See, is one bearing the inscription, "King Astulphus, under Pope Leo IV., made Britain tributary to the Blessed Peter." Leo reigned from 847 to 855, during which time Ethelwulf was King of England.

Guienne, and also against the Normans, who had made several inroads into the French kingdom. In these wars Baldwin obtained much distinction, and was accounted the most valiant warrior of the time. Having a situation near the King's person, he was often in the habit of seeing the Princess Judith,<sup>1</sup> whose notice he attracted by his assiduity and attention. So entirely did Baldwin win her respect and affection, that before the period of Ethelwulf's visit to France, we learn that he was betrothed to her in marriage. Nevertheless, Charles the Bald, for state reasons, hesitated not to break off this earlier contract in favor of the more splendid alliance with the King of England, setting at naught every obstacle which intervened on either side in a match more particularly unsuitable from the great disparity in age of the parties. Accordingly Ethelwulf and Judith were betrothed and married<sup>2</sup> in the following October. The ceremony of the espousals took place in the palace of Verberie, when the nuptial benediction was bestowed by Hincmar, Bishop of Rheims, who at the same time placed upon the head of the little bride a diadem, and hailed her as a queen. An account of this interesting ceremony of Judith's marriage and coronation, when a double benediction was pronounced on her, first as a spouse and then as a queen, is yet extant. The magnificence of Judith's crown is even mentioned in a prayer on the occasion.

Presents worthy of the royal personages concerned in this marriage were mutually given, after which Ethelwulf determined on his return to England,<sup>3</sup> and took shipping with his youthful bride. During his stay at the French court, the news he had received from England was of a nature to disturb even bridal festivities. An insurrection had been raised against him, by Ealstan, Bishop of Sherborne, and Eanwulf, Earl of Somerset, at the head of which his eldest son Ethelbald had placed himself.<sup>4</sup> Ealstan, to whom Ethelwulf had been indebted for his own prosperity, had become his enemy on finding his influence on the decline, and incited Ethelbald to rebellion, on the plea that his father, who lived the life of a monk, ought to pass the residue of his days in religious seclusion, as he had begun them, and give up the government in his favour, as Ina and Cadwalla had done, who, like Ethelwulf, had gone on pilgrimages to Rome, but had first abdicated their crowns. Ethelbald had expected, when his brother Athelstan died, that his father would have made him King of Kent; but finding not only that this was not done, but that Alfred, his father's favorite, was consecrated King by the Pope, he feared Ethelwulf intended to prefer him as his successor on the throne. A natural thirst after power, and the dictates of an ill-disposed mind, combined to draw him over to the schemes of Ealstan; and the people were so much disaffected by the absence of their monarch, and the prospect of an infant heir to the throne, that these considerations, added to the unpopular nature of the new match entered into by Ethelwulf, prepared the way for a revolt. When, therefore, the newly-married pair returned to their dominions, the rebels went so far as to prohibit the

<sup>1</sup> Marcus d'Assigny's Hist. of the Earls of Flanders.

<sup>2</sup> Sharon Turner.

<sup>3</sup> Asser.

<sup>4</sup> Milton, Holinshed, Turner.

King's entrance into his realm; taking for their ostensible pretext, that Ethelwulf had not only dignified his new wife with the title of Queen, without the consent of the country, but had eaten at the same table with her, and placed her by his side in a chair of state, by which he had violated the law made by the West Saxons on the death of their King Bertric; by which they considered themselves absolved from their allegiance; and Ealstan and Ethelbald forbade him to enter England with his outlandish wife.<sup>1</sup> Everything appeared to threaten civil war,<sup>2</sup>—the father and son were opposed at the head of either party—when the friends of both interfered to prevent bloodshed, and it was agreed that Ethelbald should receive from his father the whole of the ancient kingdom of Wessex, which was the western division of his territories, while the King himself should govern the eastern portion, comprehending Kent, Essex, and Sussex:<sup>3</sup> the latter was the district the late King Athelstan had enjoyed, and by far the least considerable portion. Some of Ethelwulf's courtiers representing this to him, and wishing to persuade him not to sign the treaty with Ethelbald, the excellent monarch replied, that "he would not purchase the territories he had ceded to his son at the price of civil warfare;" and added prophetically, that "even could he so obtain them, Ethelbald would soon recover them through his death."<sup>4</sup> On one point, however, Ethelwulf was less placable—he insisted on the honours due to his Queen Judith, whom he continued to treat with the same respect and affection, notwithstanding the displeasure it occasioned in the kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

Amid the general dissatisfaction at the infringement of the West Saxon law, which pronounced it illegal for a Queen of England to wear the diadem of state, Ethelwulf convened the three estates of his kingdom, to sanction the ceremony of Judith's coronation, as well as to ratify the instrument by which he had bound himself and his people to pay over a tribute to the Holy See.

The ceremony of Judith's coronation<sup>6</sup> was performed with all possible

<sup>1</sup> Milton.

<sup>2</sup> To use the words of Dr. Lingard: — "It is some confirmation of the story told by Asser, that while, from the reign of Offa to the extinction of the Mercian monarchy, we have many undisputed charters, subscribed by the consorts of the Kings of Mercia, with the title of Regina, there is not one in which any consort of a King of Wessex does the like during the same period. The most early instance in which that title is given to a wife of a King of Wessex, in any contemporary document, occurs, if I mistake not, in the reign of Edmund (anno 945), when Ethelgive, making her will, declares her intentions to her lord the King, and her lady the Queen, and bequeaths to her lady the Queen thirty mancuses of gold, and her land at Westwick. It has been supposed that queens were crowned, because in some MSS. the order for the coronation of a queen follows that for the coronation of a king; but this proves only that both orders were contained in the original from which the copy was made." — *Hist. and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, by Lingard, vol. ii., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Hume.

<sup>4</sup> Rapin.

<sup>5</sup> Raleigh.

<sup>6</sup> The particular sort of crown worn by the early Queens of England has not been described. Alfred and his successors, to Edward the Confessor, wore the commonest and most ancient form of crown. Edred and Edmond Ironside had coronets like those of our earls, having fewer points, but those points raised higher



solemnity: the form of the service used on this interesting occasion has been preserved by Du Chesne, and is worthy of notice, as supplying the only record extant of the phraseology used at the inauguration of a queen-consort.

The conclusion of the marriage ceremony constitutes the earlier portion of this form. After the ring has been given, with the exhortation, "Take this ring, the sign of fidelity and love, and the bond of marriage union, that no man may separate those whom God hath joined, who liveth and reigneth for ever," the Queen is blessed in the following words:—

"We invoke thee, Holy Lord, Omnipotent Father, Eternal God, for this thine handmaiden, whom, in the divine dispensation of thy Providence, thou hast caused to grow up from her youthful blossoming to this joyful time. Give her richly of thy fear, that she may go on full of truth before thee and all men, from day to day, unto better things. May she receive, rejoicing with us, largely of thy heavenly grace, from the kingdom above; and thence, being guarded by the strength of thy mercy from all adversity, be deemed worthy to live for ever."

The rather long and elegant prayer offered at the anointing the head of the young and beautiful Queen, here followed, in which it was supplicated that she might possess "the simplicity and meekness of the dove;" after which the coronation took place in the following words:—

"May the Lord crown thee with glory and honour, and place upon thy head a crown of spiritual precious stones, that whatever may be typified by the brightness of gold, or the changeful splendour of gems, may ever shine forth in thy life and conduct; which may He grant, to whom be honour and glory, world without end."

Then follow the blessings, thus:—

"Bless, O Lord, this thine handmaiden, thou who rulest the kingdoms of kings through all generations.

"Accept the offerings of her hands, and may she be replenished with the blessings of the fruits of the earth, of the heavens, of the dews, of the

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and pearled at the top. In some coins of Harold, that King wears a diadem of pearls round a helmet; which was common with other West Saxon Kings, who sometimes wore it on their bare heads. The coins of Offa represent that monarch with a crown of pearls and other materials, similar to that used by Constantine the Great; and his successors, Berthulf, Burghred, and Kenwulf, wore the same kind of diadem. Aldulph, in the seventh century, wore the ordinary plain fillet or diadem, when King of East Anglia. — Selden's *Titles of Honour*.

The coins of Alfred represent his head encircled with a simple diadem, after the most common and ancient fashion; and there is not an instance among the Anglo-Saxons of any imperial crown till Edward the Confessor, who had a crown much like that of the Eastern Emperors. [Notes of Spelman.]

Spelman tells us, that in the arched room in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, where the ancient regalia of the kingdom are kept, upon a box, which is the cabinet to the most ancient crown, is an inscription, as follows: "*Hæc est princi palior corona quâ coronabantur Reges Ælfredus, Edwardus, &c.,*" and the crown is of a very ancient work, with flowers, adorned with stones of somewhat a plain setting. This, by the inscription, appearing to have been the crown of Alfred and his successors, is to be supposed to have been made by his orders, and that when he was become universal King of the Heptarchy.



depths, from the heights of the ancient mountains, and from the eternal hills.

“May the blessing of him who dwelt in the bush come upon her head. Grant to her showers from heaven, the fatness of the earth, abundance of corn and wine, that their people and their posterity may obey them, and this nation bring honour to her and to her children.”

The service concludes with a short prayer, probably the same still said after the Communion, and truly beautiful and simple as it is, claims no small interest from the fact of having been in use among our ancestors no less than a thousand years ago.

Ethelwulf and Judith, after these ceremonies were over, retired into Kent, where they resided in a state of privacy better suited to the tastes of both, than the glare and splendour of public festivities. Ethelwulf had rightly appreciated the character of Judith, when he bestowed on her the queenly honours which, next to his own affections, he deemed essential to her happiness, and to the maintenance of her dignity in the eyes of his people. However just that law which had emanated from the crimes of Eadburga, and was expressive of the national abhorrence of caprice and cruelty, he considered it unjust that the young, innocent, and royally-descended Judith, should be, for that reason, deprived of her deserved rights. The grave insult offered to both himself and his young bride on their arrival in England, must have been deeply felt both by the young Queen and her more mature consort. If, however, Ethelwulf had in the first instance offended his people, by conferring on a foreigner the forfeited distinctions of queen-consort, they were afterwards induced to acquiesce in his wishes by their love for himself, which his sweetness of disposition had obtained, so that in a short time, all objections ceasing, Judith appears to have enjoyed undisputed her royal prerogative of sitting in the chair of state by her husband's side.<sup>1</sup>

The anecdote before related in the Life of Queen Osburga, respecting the first learning of Alfred the Great, can scarcely be referable to Judith, as she was almost a child herself when the young Prince first came under her notice; and as he is spoken of as singularly precocious, his learning at five years old is not extraordinary; whereas, if he was twelve, as some assert, before he learnt to read, there is a difficulty in crediting the astonishing capacity he so early is said to have displayed. Ethelwulf, his father, had been instructed by the same personage to whom his son's education was entrusted; and as his health was delicate, like most sickly children, he most probably began learning very early. Judith had come from a court infinitely more refined than that of England, and being so nearly his own age, could enter into the precocious boy's studies, and no doubt assisted them; the ladies of her time and nation being well accomplished, although Alfred complains of the ignorance of his countrymen in general, when he came to the crown. There exists, doubtless, some confusion of dates, which has caused the characteristic story told by Asser, to be attributed indifferently to the mother and step-mother of Alfred. It is certain, that Judith's stay in England was but short, even

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<sup>1</sup> Selden's Titles of Honour.

though she was twice Queen; but a few years at so early an age, and with children of great genius, can do wonders when the seed is once well sown.

Ethelwulf survived the partition of his dominions only two years, which period he passed in acts of justice and charity. The reign of Ethelwulf terminated A.D. 857, after he had sat twenty years on the throne, and his remains were interred in the Cathedral of St. Swithin, at Winchester.

No children remained by his marriage with Judith, and the dominions over which the King had ruled, were left by his will to his second son Ethelbert, and after his death, to Ethelred, his younger brother, in case of whose decease they were to devolve on Alfred. This was, in the end, the order in which they were inherited by the Princes, and finally, as will be seen in the Life of Alfred's Queen, were divided by him amongst his own family. The three younger sons of Ethelwulf had already shown themselves worthy of their parentage; but Ethelbald, the eldest, had not only rendered himself hated by the people for his arbitrary government and profligacy, but for the unfilial conduct he had displayed to his father. No sooner was Ethelwulf dead, than Ethelbald took advantage of the unprotected state of the widowed Queen, who, then little more than fourteen, was left exposed to the trials and dangers of foreign enmity. Her extreme youth, her great beauty, and the disparity of age between her and the late King, may well excuse her, even if she herself consented to the proposal of Ethelbald to make her, immediately on his father's death, his queen.

Turner, in his History of the Anglo-Saxons, refers to the Saxon Chronicle and Bede, as authorities for supposing that by law a son might wed his father's widow, and a brother his sister-in-law; but in these cases there is ample proof that the act was not according to law, but in contradiction to it, from the open indignation expressed by the people, and especially the priests, when the violent and arbitrary Prince, in spite of all opposition, announced his will.

This step is rendered the more remarkable, from the fact that Ethelbald had been the most forward in opposition to the entrance of Judith into the country, after her nuptials with Ethelwulf. Liberty of choice was of course denied to Judith, and she probably saw the propriety of yielding with a good grace to necessity.<sup>1</sup>

The second nuptials of Judith were accordingly celebrated at Chester, greatly to the disgust of the nation.

If the marriage of Ethelwulf with the French Princess had given offence, that of his son with the widow was infinitely more disliked; and the clergy, taking part with the general community, protested altogether against what they represented as sinful in the extreme. The clamours rose loud and high, and at length Ethelbald was alarmed. His health was failing,—his temporary passion for his young step-mother had, perhaps, faded,—his religious scruples awoke, as often happens with princes too late, and he gave way to the remonstrances of Bishop Swithin, little

<sup>1</sup> Turner, Holinshed, Burke, Caradoc, Milton.

regardless of the fair and youthful cause of his people's anger. It caused him, apparently, no struggle to part from Judith,<sup>1</sup> who could have desired nothing better than to relinquish a dignity which had been forced upon her, perhaps in both instances.

It would appear that she was now obliged to retire from court, while Ethelbald passed the remainder of his days in penitence so deep, as to leave regret behind him when he died, only three years after.

French historians assert, that though her marriage with Ethelbald was dissolved at the instance of the Bishop of Winchester, no church censure was passed upon Judith; and the Pope's interference in her favour, when she had, by her brother's assistance, escaped from the convent in which she was afterwards placed, appears strong presumptive evidence that both her marriages had been of a compulsory character, and that this was well known to his Holiness, who regulated his conduct accordingly.<sup>2</sup>

Judith, free to return to her native country, was now permitted to sell the possession she had received as her dower, and, with considerable wealth, set forth on her journey.

She is said to have passed through Flanders, then under her father's rule, as her safest route to escape danger. A secret motive, however, may have been the hope of a renewal of her intercourse with Baldwin, who, still remembering her extraordinary beauty and his former attachment, and advertised of the great riches she brought with her, received her with great courtesy. In short, Baldwin testified so much regard and devotion, that when Judith expected to depart for France, she was so gently detained, that she was in no haste to quit that country. Some accounts, however, state, that even in this, Judith acted not from her own free will, being forcibly detained by her handsome wooer, whose excuse was, that even in her childhood he had been promised her hand,—a circumstance which inspired pity for a disappointment so great, and enlisted many on his side.

The French King, Charles, apprehensive, perhaps, of his daughter's partiality for Baldwin leading to some indiscretion, commanded her not to delay her journey; and to manifest his displeasure, either at her having lingered so long, or at her second marriage with Ethelbald, ordered her to be confined within the walls of the Convent of Senlis, but at the same time to be treated with all the respect due to a queen.<sup>3</sup> Under the guardianship of Bishop Erpuin, the young widow resided there in a style of regal splendour; the spot itself is described as "that pleasant and healthy abode, the royal nursery, where the Kings of France were accustomed to send their children: some Roman arches of their palace, enclosing a wild fragrant garden, were standing a few years ago."<sup>4</sup>

A learned writer has been severe on Judith,<sup>5</sup> calling her an "undutiful girl of ungovernable passions." Widows were peculiarly protected against violence, and it was a crown prerogative among the Franks that no female of the royal family could marry without her parent's consent; therefore Judith was to remain under *mundbyrd*, or wardship of Church and State, till she should either resign herself to widowhood or remarry.

<sup>1</sup> Rudborn.

<sup>2</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Lingard.

<sup>5</sup> Palgrave.



Charles appears to have designed the hand of Judith for the King of Navarre, for whom she entertained the strongest aversion, a sentiment which had increased in proportion to the progress of her regard for Baldwin. According to some, the alternative of entering the cloister was offered; but the peremptory mode of dealing with the young Queen points out the influence under which her two former marriages had taken place, and shows that it was expected she would yield implicit obedience to the will of her imperious father. After having been twice given away in marriages against her will, Judith, in the present instance, determined to evade one so displeasing to herself as that now proposed. Her brother, Louis the Stutterer, who was in his father's secrets concerning Judith, fully appreciated the injustice with which she was treated, and encouraged her in her resolution of accepting no husband but Baldwin. Accordingly, at a time when Charles had left Louis to officiate as Regent of the kingdom during his own absence, a few months only after Judith had been sent to Senlis, Baldwin carried off the fair prize, with the connivance of her brother, and was supported on this occasion by the Germans also. Judith had, it appears, contrived to elude the vigilance of her guards, and in a disguise prepared for that purpose, escaped from the convent-wall, and was soon, with her lover, beyond the reach of pursuit.

One account states that the lovers repaired together to the possessions of Lothaire, the brother of Judith. This prince, who is described as being "lame and unhealthy, but humble, affectionate, diligent, and pious," was of an excellent disposition, and resided, in his office of Abbot, at St. Germain l'Auxerrois. From this place Baldwin sent Judith, to whom he had been married without delay, to Flanders; and the troops which Charles sent to recover his truant daughter, and who followed her route, were signally defeated.<sup>1</sup>

The perpetration of so daring an act as the abduction of the descendant of the mighty Charlemagne, a daughter of the royal house of France, spread great terror among the Flemings, amongst whom Baldwin held the office of grand-forester. Charles, himself, breathed nothing but revenge, threatening not only to make war on the Flemings, but utterly to destroy their whole nation. He first, however, ordered Baldwin to send his daughter home; but not being obeyed, he caused Anselm, Archbishop of Rheims, to excommunicate him for having forcibly carried off a widow.

This sentence of excommunication obliged the newly-married pair to undertake a journey to Rome, where, on their arrival, they cast themselves at the feet of Nicholas the First, the Sovereign Pontiff. Count Baldwin then declared, that "he had used no blandishments, no deceits, or violence, against Judith, who had followed him of her own accord, without even her brother Louis reclaiming her." He prayed, therefore, that of his singular clemency, and for his love to the Christian people, he would grant him remission, and endeavour by any means to soothe the mind of the King, to mitigate his anger, and to find some way of peace with him. The suppliant prayer of the "Iron-handed" chief, added to the tears of his lovely young wife, had such an effect on the pious Pontiff,<sup>2</sup> who from

<sup>1</sup> Mezerai.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard, Mezerai.



the first had disapproved of the sentence of excommunication, that he not only interdicted that decree, but sent two bishops, Rhodoald Portuensis and John Ficodensis, to the French King, as ambassadors, to intercede from himself in Baldwin's favour.<sup>1</sup> The papal embassy proceeded to Soissons, where Charles was staying, and where the angry King assembled a council of Gallic bishops to receive them, it being the second time they had been convened respecting the subject of Baldwin's marriage. Finding he could not prevail against Iron-Hand in warfare, Charles had procured the condemnation of his new son-in-law in that pious assembly by the *Gregorian Law*.<sup>2</sup> Now, on their being a second time convened, various opinions arose, and much discussion followed the announcement of what had been done by the supreme Pontiff. As regarded the request of the Pope to Charles, the King thought something ought to be yielded to his prayer; and fearing lest the hitherto unsubdued nation of Flanders should join the Danes,<sup>3</sup> who were threatening invasion of France both by sea and land, "the King swallowed the indignity, and suffered himself to be at length prevailed upon. He requited a signal injury with an uncommon benefit; not only making peace with Flanders, but receiving Baldwin into his friendship, he ratified and approved the marriage of his daughter."<sup>4</sup>

Judith and her husband were, on this occasion, admitted to a private interview with the King, who gave orders that their nuptials should be celebrated by costly feasts and public expressions of joy, A. D. 863,<sup>5</sup> though he would not assist in person at the ceremony, which was performed at Auxerre, whither the French nobles were convened for that purpose. Hipemar, Archbishop of Rheims, who had married Judith to Ethelwulf while yet a child, refusing to unite her to Baldwin on the present occasion, the ceremony was performed by the Bishop of Noviomagus.<sup>6</sup> After this the pair retired into Flanders, where they resided with much magnificence; Charles having conferred the government of that country on Baldwin, as the dowry of his daughter, together with the title of Earl, by which dignity Baldwin obtained a position among the Peers of France.

The lands appropriated to Baldwin consisted of all that tract which lies between the rivers Scheld and Somme, and the ocean, and were bestowed on the understanding that the Earl should employ all his forces to defend that territory from the Normans. The success of the Earl did not in this equal his courage, for the barbarous Normans overran all Flanders, and laid it waste with fire and sword, taking possession of many towns, one of which was Ghent, which they plundered. Baldwin had, hoping to arrest their depredations, built the city of Bruges, A. D. 856, and fortified it with a strong castle, called the Burgh; and the lands that had been laid waste, were, by his orders, recultivated. In the centre of Ghent, also, we may yet see the dark, battered towers of the castellated

<sup>1</sup> *Annales Flandriæ*.

<sup>2</sup> Although they are said to have favoured Baldwin in their hearts.

<sup>3</sup> Turner.

<sup>4</sup> *Annales Flandriæ*,

<sup>5</sup> *Hist. of the Earls of Flanders*.

<sup>6</sup> Lingard.

palace of Baudouin, "Bras de Fer." The second Baudouin added the fortifications which defended the birthplace of Charles Quint.<sup>1</sup>

It is not recorded whether Judith appeared at the French court after her reconciliation with King Charles. Three years after her marriage, her father and mother were publicly crowned at Soissons, A. D. 866 : but the heart of Charles was estranged from his consort by another, and had he not feared the consequences, he would have repudiated her. Queen Ermentrude was not long an obstacle in his way ; she died October 6th, 869, to the joy of her husband, who, far from regretting her loss, regarded the event as a benefit, and married her rival Richelda in the following year. Ermentrude died at the Abbey of St. Denis, in the church of which her remains were deposited. Many vicissitudes had been experienced by her children during her own life. One of her sons, Louis, was surnamed "the Stammerer," from a natural defect ; another, Lothaire, called *Le Boiteux*, or "the Cripple," had preceded her to the tomb, in 866 ; a third, Carloman, died, also, in 866, after having had his eyes put out by the orders of his unfeeling father.<sup>2</sup> Seldom, indeed, was any father so despotic as Charles the Bald. Carloman had been devoted to a religious life against his own will, and to escape taking the vows, fled the country, for which offence he was condemned by a synod of national bishops to *lose his eyes*. He appealed to Adrian II., the reigning Pontiff, who took his part in so warm a manner that Charles resented it as an insult. The French clergy supported Charles, and a conference terminated the dispute ; the Pope abandoning Carloman to his fate, the unfortunate Prince underwent the savage punishment to which he had been condemned.

The unfortunate Carloman was afterwards harboured by his uncle, Louis le Germanique, and maintained in a monastery out of charity. Charles, King of Aquitaine, was a fourth brother of Judith, who had likewise several sisters, all of whom became abbesses. Of the four sons of Charles the Bald by Richelda, Pepin, Drogo, Louis, and Charles, all died young, and the last when his parents were in great distress.<sup>3</sup>

The domestic tyranny Judith had personally experienced could have left her little to seek of happiness in the French court, and from the nature of her union with Baldwin, it may be presumed that their marriage was a happy one. They were blessed with several children, and though Charles, their first-born, died in infancy, the second boy, named after his father (thought by some to have had the peculiarity of baldness which distinguished his grandfather the French King, from his surname), lived

<sup>1</sup> Lingard. "Besides these, many good works are recorded of the Iron-Handed Forester, such as monasteries endowed and charities judiciously and generously bestowed. If not of regal or even noble birth, the nobility of good actions has conferred celebrity on his name, so that it matters little how historians differ as to his genealogical descent. Those, however, who are satisfied to leave the traditions of the Flemings unnoticed, place this heroic chief, in their genealogies, as the son of Count Odoaire, son of Count Ingelrain, both hereditary Counts Foresters, whose epitaphs were to be seen, in the last century, cut on stone, at Bruges [Palgrave.]

<sup>2</sup> *Anecdotes des Reines et Régentes de France.*

<sup>3</sup> Palgrave.

to inherit the earldom as Baldwin "the Bald." When her first child died, "Judith sorrowed much, attributing it to the want of mother's milk, and she determined herself to nourish the next babe, named after its father. The Lieutenant Bailli, of Tournay, expatiates upon the maternal conduct of 'Madame Judith,' a reproach to the matronly luxury and self-indulgence of his times. Baldwin II.'s manly vigour did credit to his mother's tenderness: he afterwards had abundant locks of hair, though he called himself 'le Chauve,' in honour of his grandfather."<sup>1</sup> Rudolf, his brother, become afterwards Count and Abbot of Cambrai, which city, and the country surrounding, had been purchased by his father.<sup>2</sup> Gunadilde, daughter of Baldwin and Judith, married Wifred, Earl of Barcelona.

Earl Baldwin I. is said to have given good laws to the people of Flanders, over whom he ruled sixteen years, and at his death was interred in the convent church of St. Bertin, at St. Omer's.<sup>3</sup>

Baldwin "the Bald," who succeeded his father, espoused Elstrude, a Saxon princess, daughter of Alfred the Great, and grand-daughter of Ethelwulf, the first husband of Judith.<sup>4</sup> Thus was, no doubt, revived the tie of affection and interest between the Princess of France and her pupil and companion in literature, King Alfred. Nor is it the least interesting point in the history of Judith and her family, that from the son of this marriage was derived, in the female line, our Norman race of kings; Matilda, Queen of William the Conqueror, being the immediate descendant of Arnold the Great, son of Baldwin the Bald and Elstrude of England. It is singular that though there were no children from the marriage of Judith and Ethelwulf, their descendants, in two distinct lines, should have so long ruled the realm of England.

The adventures of Judith, arranged according to the poet's fancy, are the subject of a curious poem, contained in a Collection of Ancient Ballads:<sup>5</sup> it is entitled "An excellent Ballad of a Prince of England's courtship to the King of France's Daughter, &c." (to the tune of 'Crimson Velvet'), and may interest the lover of antique traditions.

The song begins by stating that, in the days of old, the Queen of France had a daughter who was "lovely faire," and that a Prince of England, exiled and outcast, yet noted for his merit, coming to her father's court, an attachment between him and the Princess ensued. The King disapproving the match, they agreed to escape together from thralldom.

"The ladye soone prepared  
Her jewells and her treasure:  
Having no regard  
For state and royal bloode  
In homely poore array,  
She went from court away,  
To meet her joye and heart's delight,

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave, Hist. of Normandy and England.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. of the Earls of Flanders; Ducarel's Norman Antiquities.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. of the Earls of Flanders.

<sup>4</sup> Ducarel.

<sup>5</sup> The editor gives it from an ancient folio MS., collated with another in black letter, in the Pepys Collection.

"Who in a forest great  
 Had taken up his seat,  
 To wayt her coming in the night.  
 But lo! what sudden danger  
 To this princely stranger:  
 Chanced, as he sate alone!  
 By outlawes he was robbed,  
 And with ponyards stabbed,  
 Uttering many a dying grone."

The Princess, "in her strange attire," escapes without recognition to the forest, only to find her royal lover weltering in his blood on the ground. She gives vent to the most passionate exclamation of grief, and endeavours, "with her golden haire," to staunch the wounds; but her efforts and prayers are alike useless.

"All in vaine she sued,  
 All in vaine she wooed;  
 The prince's life was fled and gone."

Bewailing her own destiny, and her lover's hard fate, she passes the night in mourning over his remains, and resolves not to return to the court of her father.

"To my father's court  
 I return will never,  
 But in lowly sort  
 I will a servant bee."

Whilst she is thus lamenting, a forester, all in green, coming by, inquires the cause of her affliction. She tells him her *brother* lies slain by her side, and requests him to direct her to some situation where she may obtain servile employment, in these words:—

"Where may I remaine,  
 Gentle for'ster shew me,  
 Till I can obtaine  
 A service in my neede?  
 Pains I will not spare.  
 This kinde favour doe mee;  
 It will ease my care;  
 Heaven shall be thy meede.'

"The for'ster, all amazed,  
 On her beautye gazed  
 Till his heart was set on fire.  
 'If, faire maid,' quoth hee,  
 'You will goe with mee,  
 You shall have your heart's desire.'  
 He brought her to his mother,  
 And above all other  
 He sett forth this maiden's praise.  
 Long was his heart inflamed,  
 At length her love he gained,  
 And fortune crowned his future dayes.

"Thus unknowne he wedde  
 With a king's faire daughter:  
 Children seven they had,  
 Ere she told her birth;



Which when once he knew,  
 Humbly he besought her,  
 He to the world might shew  
 Her rank and princely worth.  
 He cloathed his children then  
 (Not like other men)  
 In partye colours strange to see.  
 The right side cloth of gold,  
 The left side to behold  
 Of woollen cloth still framed hee.  
 Men thereatt did wonder;  
 Golden fame did thunder  
 This strange deed in every place.  
 The King of France came hither,  
 It being pleasant weather,  
 In those woods the hart to chase.

“The children then they bring —  
 So their mother willed it —  
 Where the royall king  
 Must of force come bye.  
 Their mother’s riche array  
 Was of crimson velvet;  
 Their father’s all of gray,  
 Seemelye to the eye.

“Then this famous king,  
 Noting everything,  
 Asked how he durst be so bold  
 To let his wife so weare,  
 And decke his children there  
 In costly robes of pearle and gold?  
 The forrester replying,  
 And the cause descrying,  
 To the king these words did say:  
 ‘Well may they by their mother  
 Weare rich clothes with other,  
 Being by birth a princesse gay.’

The king, aroused thus,  
 More heedfullye beheld them,  
 Till a crimson blush,  
 His remembrance crost.  
 ‘The more I fix my mind  
 On thy wife and children,  
 The more methinks I find  
 The daughter which I lost.  
 Falling on her knee,  
 ‘I am that child,’ quoth she;  
 ‘Pardon me, my sovereign liege.’  
 The King perceiving this,  
 His daughter deare did kiss,  
 While joyfull teares did stopp his speeche.  
 With his traine he tourned,  
 And with them sojourned.  
 Strait he dubbed her husband knight;  
 Then made him Erle of Flanders,  
 And chiefe of his commanders:  
 Thus were their sorrowes put to flight.”

## ELSWITHA, WIFE OF ALFRED THE GREAT, AND ETHELFLEDA, "LADY OF MERCIA."

Romantic legend of the meeting of Alfred the Great and Elswitha—Albanac's family—The nocturnal visit—The daughters—The father's resolve—The choice offered—Marriage of Alfred and Elswitha—Sudden illness of the bridegroom—Connubial affection—Passage in Boethius—Famine in England—St. Swithun—Children of Elswitha—Her happiness, and fondness for her husband—Athelney—The Danes—Dangers—Generosity of Alfred—Monastery founded—Alfred's Will—Eadburga and Elswitha—St. Mary's, Newminster—Learning of Ethelfleda—Lady of Mercia—Her numerous fortresses—The captive Welsh Queen—Fleance, son of Banquo—Ancient Welsh customs—Candle-bearer's perquisites—Death of Ethelfleda—Mourned by King Edward—Elfwina dispossessed by her uncle—Ethelfleda buried in St. Peter's, Gloucester.

A SINGULARLY romantic legendary account exists of the first introduction of Alfred the Great to his future consort Elswitha. Alfred, like Haroun al Raschid, was fond of visiting and informing himself of the condition of every class of his subjects. On one occasion he set out, accompanied by a courtier named Ethelbert, and in his rambles stopped at the house of Albanac, a chieftain of rank and power, whose name would indicate his descent to have been rather British than Saxon. This nobleman received his sovereign with welcome, and his wife and three daughters, all of whom were extremely beautiful, attended on him, as was the custom. The dignified deportment of Elswitha, one of the young Saxon ladies, and the grace and elegance of her person, eclipsed that of her sisters at supper, when waiting upon the King. Alfred was much attracted with her charms, and praised her beauty in glowing terms. The impression made upon him was observed by Albanac, who, when the company separated for the night, communicated his suspicions to his wife. The King, on his part, at retiring, had confided to Ethelbert his admiration of Elswitha, who, with a courtier's tact, approved of his choice. Next morning, when day broke, Albanac presented himself at the door of his royal guest, requesting immediate admittance. The King bade him enter; on which, to his surprise, he beheld Albanac, with a drawn sword in his hand, conducting his three daughters, who, clad in the deepest mourning, seemed overwhelmed with the most poignant distress. "What is it I see?" exclaimed Alfred. "A father," returned Albanac, "whose honour is more dear to him than life itself. You are my King, and I am your subject, but not your slave. You are well acquainted with my illustrious ancestors, and it is now proper you should know my sentiments. Last night you discovered a particular attention to my daughter. If you have conceived the idea of dishonouring my house,

you see the sword that shall in an instant sacrifice these unhappy victims, willing to sacrifice themselves; but if a pure flame is kindled in your breast, my alliance will not disgrace the crown: choose, therefore, and name her that is born to such distinguished honour!"

This somewhat abrupt proceeding, the legend goes on to say, did not displease Alfred, who, appreciating the noble and daring courage of the father of Elswitha, immediately professed his readiness to make her his wife, and she was soon afterwards Queen. That the King had chosen his partner wisely, was proved by subsequent events. Elswitha was virtuous and amiable, and inspired her noble husband with a lasting affection for her.

It is a subject of pleasing contemplation to trace the feelings of Alfred on the subject of connubial affection, which appears from his writings, wherein he expresses himself in terms of enthusiasm. A passage in Boethius, translated by Alfred, runs thus: some additions to the original being made by the King, these are given in italics:—

"Liveth not thy wife also! She is exceedingly prudent and very modest. She has excelled all other women in purity. I may, in a few words, express all her merit; this is, that in all her manners she is like her father. She lives now for thee, *thee alone.* Hence, *she loves naught else but thee.* She has enough of every good in this present life, but she has despised it all for thee alone. She has shunned it all, because only she has not thee also. This one thing is now wanting to her. Thine absence makes her think that all which she possesses is nothing. Hence for thy love she is wasting, and full nigh dead with tears and sorrow." "Alfred dwells on the 'vivat tibi' of Boethius with manifest delight, and dilates upon the thought as if with fond recollections of the conduct of his own wife, who shared his adversity with him."

Such legends as these are valuable as showing the habits and manners of the times, and prove how lawless and turbulent they were, when no confidence was placed in the honour of those the highest in power, when their gratification was at stake. Alfred himself was superior to the period at which he lived, and a few years afterwards suspicion would not have fallen on him; but at this time, he was only just come to the crown, and, being still very young, had not as yet had an opportunity of proving to his subjects his rare and remarkable worth.<sup>2</sup>

The real history of his marriage is merely that his wife Elswitha was the daughter of Æthelfrid,<sup>3</sup> surnamed Mucil, Ealdorman of Mercia; and that her mother was nobly born, being Edburga of the royal house of Mercia. Alfred was just twenty when he married, and during the nuptial festivities, which lasted several days, he was seized with an alarming malady, from which, it is said, "he enjoyed scarcely a day's respite during more than twenty years of his useful and active life."<sup>4</sup>

He never, however, allowed the acute pain of his malady to interfere

<sup>1</sup> Sharon Turner.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard, however, alludes to opinions of his character in early life, which probably accounts for the suspicions of Mucil: he quotes St. Neot and Asser.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.

<sup>4</sup> Lappenberg.

with his manly resolution; and by the force of his extraordinary will, contrived to master his bodily sufferings, which are, indeed, said rather to have strengthened his mental energy.

The year of Elswitha's marriage, A. D. 868, was noted for a terrible famine, felt in all parts of Europe, so that in some places the living are said to have fed upon the bodies of the dead! And it is further said, that this famine was followed, in 869, "by a great mortality of man and beast." The tutor both of Alfred and his father, Swithun, Bishop of Winchester, died at this time, and desired to be buried in the open churchyard, instead of the chancel of the minster, where the ashes of the great reposed, "that the drops of rain might wet his grave; thinking that no vault was so good to cover his grave as that of heaven." The popular Scottish proverb and superstition contained in the following lines, probably arose from the expression he used:—

"Saint Swithin's Day, if thou dost rain,  
For forty days it will remain;  
Saint Swithin's Day, if thou be fair,  
For forty days 'twill rain nae mair."

Asser, who frequently saw the mother of Elswitha, calls her a venerable woman, "illustrious and pious," and from the time of her husband's decease, she had ever lived the life of a true widow.<sup>1</sup>

Elswitha had five children, Edward the Elder, Ethelwold, Ethelfleda, Ethelgitha, and Elswitha, of each of whom some account will be given. Besides these she had several who died in infancy, one of whom, Edmund, had been intended by Alfred for his successor on the throne. Elswitha was deeply attached to her husband, and to judge from his character, her own conduct, and the merits of her family, she was not only a good wife, but a happy mother.

The companion of Alfred in prosperity, Elswitha shared with him his adverse fortunes. At a moment when almost every friend and adherent had forsaken the King, we find him contriving the erection of a fortress, in a place of security, his first object being to remove Elswitha and her children to a spot free from danger, which he happily succeeded in effecting. After nine successive years spent in bravely encountering those fierce enemies of England, the Danes, Alfred retreated for temporary security into the little isle of Athelney,<sup>2</sup> a spot of rising ground on the north side of Stanmoor, bounded on the north-west by the river Thone, over which there is a wooden bridge, still called Athelney Bridge. "Alfred built a castle in Athelney, and made it a very strong hold, and forcing a way unto it by a bridge or causey; for guard of the way, he built on either side a tower." This ever-memorable place was anciently environed with almost impassible marshes and morasses, and could only be approached by a boat:<sup>3</sup> it had, moreover, a very large wood of alders, which harboured stags, wild goats, and other beasts." Such<sup>4</sup> was the place of refuge of the King and Queen and their children, who lodged in a small

<sup>1</sup> Sharon Turner.

<sup>2</sup> A contraction of the Saxon word, meaning "Isle of Nobles."

<sup>3</sup> Malmesbury.



house belonging to St. Athelwine, formerly a hermit there, son of King Kinigilfus.<sup>1</sup>

During this period of adversity, it is on record that Alfred experienced many privations, one of the greatest being the want of provisions: so that of a severe winter, which set in under such unfavourable circumstances for the royal family, a characteristic tale is told. The King's attendants were one day out on the perilous expedition of fishing, for the Danes were near,—a requisite duty to provide for the daily necessity, from which Alfred and Elswitha were alone exempted. The King employed himself with reading, the Queen with her domestic occupations. At this moment a poor pilgrim, passing the gate, implored the monarch for a morsel of food. Alfred, calling to Elswitha, requested her to give the man a portion of her provision. It is said that their whole store consisted of but one loaf, and the equally humane Queen hesitated a moment in the act of charity. Alfred, however, was not to be deterred by any selfish consideration from his generous purpose. He readily bestowed the half of his slender store on the mendicant, consoling himself and his Queen with the reflection, that the benevolent hand which could supply the necessities of five thousand with but five loaves and two fishes, would doubtless provide for their future wants. Satisfaction and resignation accompanied this beneficent action, which was rewarded by the speedy return of their companions, laden with an ample store of provisions.<sup>2</sup>

After Alfred quitted this retreat, and had subdued his enemies, he founded on the spot a monastery for Benedictine monks, to commemorate his gratitude to Heaven for the shelter it had afforded to himself and his family: this religious foundation was liberally endowed both by Alfred and his successors on the throne.<sup>3</sup>

Elswitha enjoyed the society of her beloved and excellent husband for

<sup>1</sup> Biog. Brit.

<sup>2</sup> Spelman relates the story of the pilgrim as of his mother, not his wife, though he thinks it was the latter who was with the King; Judith having returned into France, and Osburga being dead. After the deed of charity, the King, falling asleep, dreamt of St. Cuthbert, who came to announce to him, in reward of his charity, that he should be restored to his kingdom, and that his servants would speedily return with abundance of fish. His mother, who also had fallen asleep, was called by the King, who declared his dream to her, and learnt she had dreamt the same thing, which, while they were yet busy recounting to each other, was in part realised by the return of their attendants.—Spelman.

<sup>3</sup> A jewel of gold, enamelled like a bulla or amulet, to hang round the neck, circumscribed, in Saxon characters, "Alfred ordered me to be made," was found there. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum. An engraving of it may be seen in Gough's Camden (70).—Turner.

The monastery Alfred built in Athelney was of wood. It was borne upon four main wooden pillars, and enclosed round about with cancellings or chancel-work; they having not then the use of glass, nor other means to shut out the violence of weather, and yet let in sufficient light, than by fine open-work carvings, and lattices of window-work, of which (to express the curiosity) Malmesbury says that they were carved *opere sphericò*. According to Spelman (see notes), there were four cancells, choirs, or chapells, surrounding the *area* or *auditory* of the church.—Spelman, *Life of Alfred*, p. 166.

nearly twenty-eight years :<sup>1</sup> the two last which preceded his death, which occurred A. D. 900, were marked by a great increase of suffering from the malady by which he was afflicted.<sup>2</sup> During the latter part of their union, the royal pair, hand in hand, restored and patronized many female religious communities. The nunnery at Shaftesbury was founded by the King, and when completed, Alfred placed in it his daughter Ethelgive, who assumed the government of the infant establishment, while several females of the first distinction hastened to profess themselves her disciples.<sup>3</sup>

Elswitha herself founded the Abbey of St. Mary, at Winchester, aided, as some say, by the King. This edifice, known also as Nunnaminstre, or the New Minstre, was situated in the east part of the city, on the north side of the cathedral, with which it was parallel; but from the unhealthiness of its situation, and too great proximity to the cathedral, was afterwards removed to Hyde Meadows.

King Egbert had entailed his estates, by his will, on his male descendants, to the exclusion of females: "to the spear-side and not to the spindle-side." Ethelwulf, his son, after making his second son Ethelbert King of Kent, bequeathed at his death to the remaining three, certain lands, which were to come eventually to the survivor. Alfred, surviving his two elder brothers, made a new agreement, that the survivor should enjoy the personal estate of the other, and with it the lands bequeathed by Ethelwulf. Before, however, Alfred's will was made, he assembled the Thanes of Wessex, at Langdon, "lest any one should say that I had defrauded my kinsfolk;" for by the same agreement it had been stipulated with Ethelred, that all real property, acquired by grant or purchase, should be left to the nephews of the survivor. Wherefore Alfred's will states, that if any of the lands which he left to females had descended to him from Egbert, he desired his heirs male to take the lands, and give to the females an equivalent in money. The Saxon Thanes having approved the King's title to the property, the following day he divided his lands among his two sons, his three daughters, his two nephews, his cousin Osferth, and his wife Elswitha. To each of his sons he left five hundred pounds; and to the Queen and the three Princesses, her daughters, four hundred pounds each, at that time no inconsiderable sum of money.<sup>4</sup> Besides these, he left certain sums to his ealdormen, servants, and bishops; fifty mancuses of gold to fifty priests, fifty to the poor ministers of God, fifty to poor people in distress, and fifty to the church in which he should be buried.<sup>5</sup> To Queen Elswitha he also bequeathed three towns; Wantage, the birth-place of Alfred, was one of these, where stood a palace of the Saxon Kings.<sup>6</sup> The manor of Ethandune,<sup>7</sup> with other Berkshire lands, were also mentioned in the will of Alfred as left to Queen Elswitha. She had also other property, some of which was bestowed by herself on Glastonbury, and afterwards confirmed to that church by King Edgar.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Speed.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Raleigh.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.

<sup>4</sup> Biog. Brit.

<sup>5</sup> Lingard.

<sup>6</sup> Lysons's Mag. Brit.

<sup>7</sup> Eddington, near Hungerford.—Lysons.

<sup>8</sup> Winchcomb—the name of which signifies "the Valley of Battle," given, in

On the death of Alfred, Queen Elswitha retired to the Abbey of St. Mary, Winchester. Eadburga, daughter of Edward the Elder, was abbess of this establishment, which followed the Benedictine rule, and was so popular that her name as patroness of the abbey was joined to that of the Virgin Mary, to whom it was dedicated. Elswitha, admiring the virtues of her grand-daughter Eadburga, and also witnessing the tranquillity enjoyed by her daughter the Abbess of Shaftesbury, resolved to pass her declining years in religious seclusion. In the establishment and society of the Abbess Eadburga she died, A. D. 904, having survived her excellent husband only four years.

The remains of King Alfred were at first interred in the Cathedral of Winchester; and we learn from Asser that a magnificent monument of precious porphyry was erected to his honour, who was renowned as "the truth-teller"—one of the most noble of all characteristics in either sovereign or subject.<sup>1</sup> In compliance with his father's will Edward the Elder caused the edifice of Newminster to be completed, and it was consecrated on the advent of St. Judoc, A. D. 903, being at the first only a house and chapel for the learned monk Grimbold. The foundation and chief parts of the building had been laid and built by Alfred during his life, and Grimbold, the first to set the King to the undertaking, was designed by him to be the first Abbot. The monastery was situated on the north side of Winchester Cathedral, with which it was parallel, and there wanted room for some of its parts: it was placed so near the cathedral that the singing-men in the choir of the one were easily heard into the choir of the other, and this gave occasion of many differences about it. The place being so "straight and hard to be enlarged, the King was fain to pay the Bishop a mark of gold for every foot of land which he was forced to buy, that he might have commodity sufficient for the shops or work-houses for his monks' offices<sup>2</sup> belonging to the monastery."<sup>3</sup>

Edward the Elder, on the completion of the structure, placed in it secular canons, under St. Grimbold as abbot;<sup>4</sup> after which he caused the remains of his father, King Alfred, to be conveyed thither, with solemn pomp and magnificence, from the adjacent cathedral. The body, also, of Queen Elswitha, which had been at first entombed in St. Mary's Abbey, Newminster, was also, by his orders, conveyed thither, to be deposited with that of her husband. It was not, however, ordained that they should repose on this spot of their own selection; its contiguity to Winchester Cathedral, and unhealthiness of the situation, caused the subsequent removal of the religious establishment to Hyde Meadows, without the city, in the reign of Henry I., at which period it was known as St.

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A. D. 965, to Glastonbury, by Queen Elswitha—was still in the hands of the monks of that establishment at the time of the Norman survey.

The Saxon Queen, says Turner, "had her separate property; for, in a gift of land, she gives fifteen mancuses, calling them a part of the land of her own power. She had also officers peculiar to her household; for the persons with whose consent and testimony she made the grant, are called *her nobles*."

<sup>1</sup> Asser says this tomb was erected in St. Peter's, Winchester.

<sup>2</sup> Annals of Winchomb, 905.

Speiman.

<sup>4</sup> Butler.



Grimbald's Monastery. The learned Beauclerc and his Saxon Queen Maude, the descendant of Alfred and Elswitha, in whom were united the interests of the Norman and Saxon cause, attended in person the removal of the bones of that king and queen to the new edifice of Hyde Abbey. The monks of St. Grimbald's, in solemn procession on the occasion, carried with them the relics of three saints, as well as the remains of Alfred and Elswitha. During the civil war of 1142, Hyde Abbey was burnt to the ground, and a great part of its treasures perished in the flames: the edifice was, however, rebuilt in the reign of Henry II., and restored to its former rank and splendour, which it retained till the destruction of religious houses at the Reformation, at which period it was reduced to a heap of ruins.<sup>1</sup>

Ethelfleda, the first-born of Alfred's children by Queen Elswitha, was esteemed the most learned, as she was the most remarkable woman of her time, and singularly distinguished for masculine spirit and abilities. This princess conferred on her country many benefits; and her promptitude and valour saved it more than once from those rapacious ravagers, the Danes. In talent she more nearly resembled her glorious father than any of his children; and equally to her mother was she indebted for those noble qualities which made her illustrious. At a very early age, Ethelfleda was married to Ethelred, Earl of Mercia, who, being in an infirm state of health, was frequently prevented attending to the care of government. His place was, on these occasions, well supplied by his wise and learned consort, whose great foresight and prudence in the conduct of public affairs were acknowledged from the first. There are records extant which prove that she took part even in her father's councils.

After Alfred's death, Edward the Elder bestowed anew on his sister and her husband conjointly, or perhaps only confirmed, the government of Mercia, with the title of "Subregulus Merciorum" to the Earl. Accordingly in an instrument of Werfred, Bishop of Worcester, to that church, made A. D. 904, the royal couple are both together styled in the Saxon tongue Æthred, the Alderman or Duke, and Ethelfled, the *Lords* of Mercia. A period of twenty-four years must have elapsed between the date of this charter and the one first mentioned. Other charters granted by this princess bear her signature alone, thus, "Ego Ethelfled consensi."

Ethelfleda's piety, according to the opinion of that time was great. After the birth of a daughter, she resolved to devote herself solely to a life of heroism and the care of her country's good, instead of indulging in the happiness of maternity; and her husband, sickly and weak both in mind and body, did not oppose her will. She, therefore, threw off all the weakness of her sex from that time, and appears in history rather as a general than as a mother or wife. She founded monasteries, as one at Gloucester testifies, and it was there that Ethelred, dying, was entombed, in 912.

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<sup>1</sup> In our own times, the site of the building where Alfred and Elswitha rested, gives place to the county Bridewell, a few remnants marking the antiquity of the hallowed spot.



After his death, conjointly with her brother, Edward the Elder, she exerted all her energies to repel the Danes, and by her counsels and acts greatly aided the King.

As soon as Ethelfleda became a widow, Edward made a partition of Mercia, apparently with her full consent, annexing London and Oxford to his own dominions of Wessex, and committing the other portion of the government to her care.<sup>1</sup> From this time till her death, a period of eight years, Ethelfleda held sovereign rule with the title of Lady of Mercia, and the extraordinary martial talents she exhibited during this season of power procured her the honourable titles not only of "Queen," but of "King" also, as if those of Countess-lady, which she possessed, were inadequate to express her heroism.

Her attention was chiefly directed to the necessity of erecting fortresses in different parts of the kingdom, to prevent the Danes from extending their territory, and of checking their inroads; for many fastnesses had fallen into the hands of those dangerous intruders, who could thus hold the whole country in fear and subjection. At Hereford, and at Witham in Essex, Edward built strong places; and in the same year of her becoming a widow, the Saxon Chronicle records that Ethelfleda, "on the Holy Eve called the Invention of the Holy Cross," came to Shergate, and built the fortress there, and another at Bridgenorth in the same year. A monastery, dedicated to St. Barnabas, was likewise founded by the "Lady of Mercia," at Brunnesburgh,<sup>2</sup> that year, which shortly after fell to decay.

One of the royal palaces of King Offa was at Tamworth, whence many charters of succeeding sovereigns were dated. This town became, in 913, the residence of Ethelfleda, who restored it from the ruinous condition in which it had been placed by the incursions of the Danes. She erected a tower there, "in the fore part of the summer," says the Chronicle, on the artificial mount upon which the present castle stands. In the same year, before Lammas, "the Lady of Mercia," built a fortress at Stafford; this being the first authentic record given of that town.

Early in the summer of 914, Ethelfleda built a fortress at Eddesbury, and late in the autumn of that year, another at Warwick. Dugdale, who refers the foundation of Warwick Castle to Ethelfleda, tells us that there was a mound of the same form there, and with terraces similar to that of Durham Castle. In 915, Ethelfleda caused the dungeon of Warwick Castle to be made, which is a strong tower or platform, upon a large and high mount of earth, artificially raised (such being usually placed towards the side of a castle or fort which is least defensible), the substance whereof is yet to be seen.

In 915, "after mid-winter," was built the fortress of Cherburg, and that at Warburton; and the same year, before mid-winter, one at Runcorn,<sup>3</sup> also the town of Warham, and Fadesbury, both named by Roger of Wendover.

<sup>1</sup> Bromton, Leland, Dugdale.

<sup>2</sup> In Cheshire.

<sup>3</sup> Runcorn, in Cheshire, on the banks of the Mersey, was originally built by the renowned Ethelfleda. The river here suddenly contracts from a considerable breadth to a narrow channel, by a projecting point of land from the Lancashire

In those days there were very few defensible places, such as we now call castles, which rendered it very difficult for the English to defend themselves from the incursions of foreign invaders; a defect which gave great advantages to William of Normandy, who was so sensible of the fact, that after the victory of Hastings, he neglected not to raise "a sufficient store of forts throughout the realm."<sup>1</sup> Ethelfleda had, before the Norman Prince, perceived the danger which this deficiency caused in England, and her exertions in this respect, to defend the country from the Danes, cannot be too highly appreciated. Ingulphus justly observes of this Princess, who, by some one is styled a "restorer of the brick," that in respect of the fortresses she built, and the armies she managed, she might have been thought a man."

Ethelfleda exerted herself successfully against the Welsh, preventing them coming to the aid of the Danes. This glorious achievement was accomplished in 916, when "the Lady of Mercia," at the head of a large army, entered Wales, and stormed Brecknock, where she took the "King's wife," and thirty-four of her attendants, prisoners.<sup>2</sup> This event, by which the Welsh became tributary to Mercia, occurred within three nights of the feast of St. Cirisius, and in Wales was called "*Gwaith y Dinas Newydd*," or "the Battle of the New City." The object of Ethelfleda, in this expedition, was to punish the Welsh for having put to death the innocent Abbot Egbert.

The Queen whom Ethelfleda made her captive, was Angharad, the wife of Owen. The name she bore was correspondent to the English word Anne, and was exceedingly popular in Wales, three other Queens being distinguished by it, all worthy of notice. The first Angharad was Queen of Roderic the Great, and mother of three princes, among whom that monarch divided his dominions prior to his decease, building for each, in his peculiar district, a royal residence; from which time the brothers were known as "the three crowned Princes," each wearing, on his helmet, a coronet of gold, or broad head-band, indented upwards, and set and wrought with precious stones.<sup>3</sup> The only daughter of Meredith,

side; and opposite Runcorn-gap, as the above strait is denominated, Ethelfleda erected a castle to defend this extremity of her vast domain.

"Not a vestige of this building can be seen; but its site is marked by the name of *the castle*, given to a triangular piece of land, surrounded with a mound of earth, jutting out into the river, guarded on the water-side by ledges of rocks and broken precipices, and cut off from the land by a ditch six yards in width. The parochial church stands above the Castle-rock: its foundation was probably coeval with the castle, but was certainly prior to the Conquest, since Nigel, Baron of Halton, bestowed it on his brother Wolfrith, a priest, in the time of the Conqueror."—Britton and Brayley.

When Alfred repaired and restored the different castles which had been demolished by the Danes, he, for the first time, built of stone many of those which had formerly been constructed of earth: of this number was Norwich Castle. "Alfred's Castle" there was afterwards entirely destroyed by the Danish King, Sweyn, father of Canute the Great."

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale, Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Powel, Caradoc of Llancarvan.

<sup>3</sup> Sax. Chron., Caradoc of Llan: "Y Tri Tywysoc Talaethiæ" (the three band-let-wearing princes).

son of the Queen Angharad, whom Ethelfleda captured, bore her grandmother's name, and married the ambitious Llewelyn ap Seisyllt, who, in her right, mounted the throne A.D. 1003, and, as he afterwards added North Wales to his dominions, united the three principalities which Roderic had divided among his sons, from one of whom, in fact, he claimed his descent.

Both the houses of Tudor and Stuart have been derived from Roderic the Great; the wife of Rhys ap Twdwr, ancestor of Owen Tudor, the father of Henry VII., being descended from Angharad, Queen of Llewelyn ap Seisyllt, by a second marriage with Cynfyn Hirdref. The house of Stuart is derived from Nesta,<sup>1</sup> grand-daughter of Angharad; her parents being Griffith ap Llewelyn and Ranulf. Fleance, son of the Banquo murdered by Macbeth, sought safety and shelter in the court of Griffith, in North Wales, but returned the kind reception there given him by the seduction of the Princess Nesta, or Agnes, who gave birth to a son, named Walter.<sup>2</sup> Fleance paid the forfeit of his life for his breach of faith, and the unfortunate Princess was reduced, by her father's orders, to a condition of servitude. The misfortunes of his parents were much felt by their son Walter, whose temper was violent, as is shown by the manner in which he resented insult. Being one day reproached with his ignoble origin by a young man with whom he had quarrelled, he killed him on the spot. To protect himself from punishment, he fled to Scotland, where he succeeded in obtaining a post among the English attendants of Margaret, Queen of Malcolm, and conducted himself so well, that he was soon advanced in the royal favour, and became steward of Scotland, and receiver of the revenues of the realm.<sup>3</sup> From the office held by Walter, he derived the surname of Stewart, and his descendants bore the same; not only the royal house of Stuart, but many noble Scottish families are derived from this source.

It may be thought curious to mention here some of the ancient Welsh customs as concerned their Queens.

The Queen had, by the laws of Wales, a fine for *saraad*, or offence, which might be committed three ways:—

Firstly: "When her protection shall be violated," that is, "the right to conduct beyond the bounds of the country, without pursuit and without obstruction."

Secondly: "When she shall be struck in anger;" or,

Thirdly: "When a thing shall be forcibly taken out of her hand."

The fine for this very unmanly treatment of a crowned head was to be only "*one-third* of the King's *saraad*, the gold and silver excepted. Now, the fine for the King's *saraad* was as follows:—"One hundred kine; a silver rod, with three knobs at the top, and three at the bottom, which shall reach from the ground to the King's face, when he shall sit in his chair, and as thick as his ring-finger; and a golden cup, which shall

<sup>1</sup> Nesta is used in Wales for the Greek Agnes: in the Greek, it means *chaste*. The French write it Ignatia.—Camden's Remains.

The same name applied to a man is exemplified in that of Ignatius Loyola.

<sup>2</sup> Caradoc, Llyud.

<sup>3</sup> Warrington.



hold the King's full draught, and as thick as the nail of a ploughman, when he has ploughed seven years; and a gold cover, *as broad as the King's face*, and as thick as the edge of the cup." Now, as the gold and silver was to be *excepted* in the fine for the Queen's "saraad," the value of little more than thirty-three cows was all the compensation that she was entitled to for the insults above named.

The Queen occupies a low station, also, in the arrangements made for the interior of the palace. Every one of the King's officers has an appropriate place in the hall, but the King's wife occupies her solitary chamber,<sup>1</sup> where she is waited upon by a single attendant hand-maiden; a steward, "who is to serve her in her chamber with meat and drink;" and a page, "who is to convey messages between the chamber and the hall, keep the keys of her coffers, and supply the chamber," and two or three inferior attendants: "and it is further enacted, that when the Queen shall will a song in her chamber, let the bard sing a song respecting Camlan,<sup>2</sup> and *that not loud*, lest the hall be disturbed." So that it would seem her enjoyments were to be considered only as second to those of her guests and subjects, who assembled to carouse over their meal.

Among the inferior attendants of the Queen, one was a candle-bearer, whose pleasant perquisite is to be "all the tops he shall bite off the candles, also the broken bread and fragments that fall over the Queen's dish."

No female domestic seems to have been employed in the King's household, except the Queen's handmaiden, the baking-woman, and the laundress. These last two were allowed the right of protection,—the baking-woman as far as she could throw her kneading-bat, the laundress as far as she could throw her washing-beetle.

These laws, generally speaking, place the value of every ordinary woman at one-third of that of her husband, and arrange that, in cases of separation by mutual consent, the joint property should be fairly shared between them.

"If husband and wife separate, the husband has the swine and the sheep; if only one kind, to be shared. Goats are to the husband. Of the children, the eldest and youngest to the husband, the middlemost to the wife. The household furniture to be shared, but the milking-vessels, except the pail, to the wife; the husband, the drinking-vessels and riddle; the wife, the sieve. The husband has the upper stone of the hand-mill; the wife, the lower one. The upper garments are the wife's; the under garments, the husband's; and the kettle, coverlet, bolster, fuel, axe, settle, and all the hooks except one, the pan, trivet, axe, bill, ploughshare, flax, linseed, wool, and the house-bag, to the wife; if any gold, it is to be shared between them. The husband to have the corn above the ground and under, and the barn, the poultry, and one of the cats; the rest to the wife. To the wife, the meat in the brine, and the cheese in the brine; those hung up belong to the husband. The butter, meat, and cheese, in cut,

<sup>1</sup> In Brittany, even at the present day, the wife is the least cared for of the family, and is expected to attend on the others.

<sup>2</sup> The battle in which Arthur fell.



belong to the wife; also, as much meal as she can carry between her arms and knees, from the store-room to the house. Their apparel to be divided.”<sup>1</sup>

“The wife had an exclusive right to her jewellery and wearing apparel,” and the wife of a “privileged or *free* man might lend her under garment, mantle, headcloth, and shoes, without consent of her husband, and can give meat and drink unrestrictedly, and can lend the furniture. The wife of the ‘*taeog*,’ or bondsman, could only lend her head-covering, and of her household utensils, only her sieve and riddle; and these, but at the distance she can be heard calling, with her feet on the threshold. The reasons for these restrictions, in regard to the wife of the bondsman, was probably owing to the fact that the household goods, and even the clothing, were the property of the bondsman’s master.”<sup>2</sup>

On the capture of Queen Angharad, the Welsh King, Owen, fled to Derby, where he was kindly received by the Danes. Ethelfleda, apprised of this, followed Owen thither with her army; and in 918, the Saxon Chronicle informs us, that “with the help of God, before Lammas,” she conquered that city, with all that thereto belonged. The Queen, on this memorable occasion, had nearly lost her life through her heroism. Speed compares her to Zenobia, saying, that her person was in the greatest danger when endeavouring to enter the gate, multitudes of the Danes resisting her progress; she, however, persevered and succeeded in entering the town, though many of her officers fell in the encounter, and four of her warriors, who guarded her royal person, and were most dear to her, were slain when fighting by her side, by Owen, the Welsh King;<sup>3</sup> a circumstance which was to her “a cause of sorrow.” Caradoc, describing this struggle, says, that when Gwyane, Lord of the Isle of Ely, Ethelfleda’s steward, perceived the Queen’s danger, he set fire to the gates, and rushing furiously on the Britons, entered the town; on which, Owen, finding he was overmatched, chose rather to fall by the sword, than cowardly to yield himself to a woman. Boadicea appears revived in this account.

The year 920 witnessed the recovery of Leicester and York from her enemies, the Danes. Leicester was taken early in the year, without loss, and the greater part of the army that belonged to it, submitted to her. At this period the character of Ethelfleda again reminds us forcibly of her illustrious father. The historian of the city of Leicester<sup>4</sup> says, “she relieved in many places the distresses of mankind, which the horrors of war had made miserable. The city of Leicester she beheld with the tenderest compassion, which had been honoured by a royal residence, but whose beauty and strength had fallen to decay by the annihilating power of war. Its miserable inhabitants she succoured; its wasted dwellings she bade to rise from their ruinous heaps in pleasing order. She repaired its fortifications, and built a wall that encompassed the city, of such amazing strength that it is called by Matthew Paris *indissoluble*. “The foundation of the wall is discoverable in many places at this day; and

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Lawrence’s History of Woman in England.

<sup>3</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>4</sup> Thoresby.

such is the tenacity of the mortar, that whenever the inhabitants of Leicester have occasion to remove any part of the foundation, the stones of which it was built are found almost inseparable."

After the reduction of Derby by Ethelfleda, the Yorkists promised, and confirmed, some by agreement, and some with oaths, that they would be in her interest.<sup>1</sup> On the submission of York, the independent organisation of the "Seven Burghs" was broken up.<sup>2</sup>

After an eight years' reign, and many glorious acts, Ethelfleda died at Tamworth. This event, which occurred twelve nights before midsummer, 920, was felt by the public, who loved and venerated her, as their own private loss, and deeply mourned by King Edward, who, at the time deprived him of this beloved sister and faithful ally, was staying at Stamford. Directly the intelligence of the death of Ethelfleda reached him, the King rode to Tamworth, where he received the allegiance of all the people of Mercia. Not only the subjects of Ethelfleda rendered homage to Edward, but the three Kings of North Wales sought him for their lord; and on his proceeding to Nottingham, which he secured and fortified, all the Mercians there, whether Danish or English, espoused his cause. Thus the influence of the royal Lady of Mercia, even after her death, procured for her brother the universal homage of those tribes whom she had compelled to acknowledge her power.

A share of power for a time was permitted by Edward to rest in the hands of Elfwin, only child of Ethelfleda, who had been formerly placed by her mother under the King's guardianship,<sup>3</sup> but of this she was afterwards deprived by Edward, on the plea that she had promised marriage to Reynold, the Danish King, "*without his knowledge.*" Whether or not this was a true charge, the Princess was "deprived of all authority,"<sup>4</sup> and conveyed as an honourable captive into Wessex. Her imprisonment took place "about three weeks before mid-winter," so that the duration of her power was short. From this time the name of Ethelfleda's daughter disappears from English history, Mercia being annexed by Edward to his own dominions. Caradoc of Llancarvan considers that Edward's unjust conduct to his niece brought upon him the troubles which followed in his kingdom. Turner, however, remarks that, in the latter part of Edward's reign, a peculiar spirit seemed to have excited the Anglo-Danes; an argument in favour of Edward having been obliged to act as he did from motives of personal security, and to defend himself from the danger of Elfwin's directing her power against the security of the State.

The remains of Ethelfleda were deposited in St. Peter's, Gloucester, in the southern porch, where they were discovered in the time of Archbishop Thurstan, on the occasion of the foundations of the church being

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> The Five Burghs were "Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, and Stamford. Chester and York could only be joined in a more direct alliance; but when there was a common action among them, they were called the 'Seven Burghs.'"

<sup>3</sup> Caradoc of Llancarvan.

<sup>4</sup> Saxon Chronicle, Palgrave.

enlarged.<sup>1</sup> The following lines are translated from Henry of Huntingdon on the fact of the contemporaries of this princess honouring her with the title of King:—

“Mighty Elfreda! maiden, thou should'st bear  
The name of Man : — though Nature cast thy frame  
In Woman's softer mould—yet he could fear  
Thy matchless might! Let him resign his claim,  
And, maiden, do thou change thy sex's name.  
In grace, a queen—be hence a king in might,  
And ages shall renounce proud Cæsar's fame,  
To gaze on thine, as on a fairer light!

So, maiden, fare thee well! surpassing queen, good night!”<sup>2</sup>

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Malmesbury.

<sup>2</sup> O Elfreda potens, &c.

## EGWINA, ELFLEDA, EDGIFA, AND ELFGIVA,

### QUEENS OF EDWARD THE ELDER AND EDMUND THE PIOUS.

Romantic tale of Athelstan's mother—The loves of Egwina and Edward—Dream of the Shepherd's daughter—The nurse of the King's children—Adoption of Egwina—The bright light—Edward's second wife Elfleda; her seven children—His third wife Edgifa—Edgifa's lawsuit and will—Athelstan and Beatrice—Goda's dishonesty—Education of the family of Edward the Elder—Eadburga the nun: her choice—Edward's death, and his son Ethelwerd's—Athelstan named as successor—He provides for his family—Beatrice marries Sihtric, King of Northumberland—Edgifa marries Charles the Simple—Her trials and story—Edgifa and Elfgifa sent to Germany—Their marriage-list of the sisters—Hugh the Great and Edilda—The marriage presents—Revived fortunes of Edgifa and her son, Louis d'Outremer—Restoration and imprudence—Harshness of Louis to his mother—The widow of Edward the Elder still goes on with her lawsuit—Edmund the Pious—St. Dunstan—The precipice—Elfgiva—Legend—Explanation of the dream—Edmund assassinated—Reay Cross on Stanmore—Monasteries—Edred and St. Dunstan—Edwy the Tyrant; his ill-usage of his grandmother—Edgar re-establishes her in her rights—She bestows her property on the church—Her death.

THE marriage of Edward the Elder with the beautiful maiden Egwina is not an ascertained fact; but she was the mother of one of the greatest and the most worthy of the Kings of England, and the preference of Alfred for him above his other grandchildren, as well as of Edward above all his sons, might lead to the conclusion that he was considered legitimate, although his birth was brought forward as a reproach to the good and learned Athelstan by the disaffected among his subjects. The legend of the loves of Egwina and Edward is told by several chroniclers: by William of Malmesbury, who at the same time calls her "*illustis fœmina*;" and Florence, who does the same, naming her "*mulier nobilissima*." It is, therefore, by no means improbable that she really was the wife of Prince Edward. The story is thus told:—

In the time of King Alfred there was a shepherd's daughter, a young maiden of extraordinary beauty, who had so singular a vision in her sleep that it became the theme of the whole neighbourhood, and reached the King's ears. She dreamt that as she lay on her bed, a bright light, as of a full moon, shone forth from her body and illumined all England. The nurse of King Alfred's children was told of this dream, which by her was repeated to the Queen, who told it to her husband. Alfred was so much struck with the fact, that he had the maiden sent for, and received her into his house, adopting her from that time and treating her as his own child. She remained, therefore, under the nurse's care.



Prince Edward who was not at the time at home, returned in due course, and visiting his nurse, was astonished and delighted with the addition to the family. The extreme beauty of Egwina, which seemed to make an impression on all, did not fail to fascinate the young prince. Whether Egwina's birth was known to King Alfred to be noble, and that, aware of her having been concealed as the shepherd's daughter, he did not oppose the passion of his son, or whether they were united before he knew of it, is not ascertained. Athelstan, and a sister called Beatrice, were born to Edward; and from the first, his subjects then, and the world since, might agree that he was the bright light of his mother's dream, for he filled all England with a glory never known before.<sup>1</sup>

Egwina appears to have died immediately after the birth of her daughter, and Edward was free to make what alliance he pleased. Very soon after her death, he married Elfleda, daughter of the Saxon Earl, Etheline. He had not then succeeded to the crown, but in 901 he was crowned, with his queen, in great pomp, at Kingston-upon-Thames.

Elfleda bore seven children to her husband, and Edward found himself a widower for the second time, for her life seems to have ended prematurely. He, however, in a short time appears again as a husband, having married a lady of high birth, named Edgifa, the daughter of Earl Sighelm.

This Queen, almost immediately after marriage, became involved in the intricacies of a lawsuit. Her father Sighelm had engaged part of his land in a mortgage, and after his death it was redeemed by the oath of Edgifa, which by the Saxon laws was considered as equivalent in value to the worth of the money which Sighelm had paid to the mortgagee, but for which he had neglected to obtain a charter of release.<sup>2</sup> The Queen's will, which may be seen in the Appendix to Lye's Saxon Dictionary, where it is translated from the Anglo-Saxon into Latin, throws much light on this singular transaction, and on the habits of Queen Edgifa's days.

In her will, Edgifa declares to the Archbishop of the Convent of Christ's Church, at Canterbury, how the land of Cowling came to her, viz.—“That her father had granted to her the land and deed, as he rightfully acquired it, and his ancestors granted it to him. It happened that her father borrowed thirty pounds of Goda, and delivered to him this land as surety for the money, and he held it seven years. Then it happened that all the Kentish men were in the war at Holme. But Sighelm, her father, was unwilling to set out for the wars in any one's debt, and therefore repaid to Goda the thirty pounds, and bequeathed the land to Edgifa, his daughter. When he had fallen in battle, then Goda denied the payment of the money, and kept possession of the land for six years. Then Berksige Deyring,<sup>3</sup> persisted in affirming it, till at length the nobles who were there, counselled Edgifa to purge the land of her father of so great a sum of money; and she accordingly made oath, in the presence of the whole people at Arlesford, and there cleared her father concerning the

<sup>1</sup> Lappenberg, Fl. Wigorn, William of Malmesbury.

<sup>2</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>3</sup> A Saxon lawyer?

repayment, by oath, of the thirty pounds. She was not, however, allowed to enter on possession of the land, until her friends had prevailed upon King Edward to prohibit Goda from holding it any longer, on pain of losing all he possessed; whereupon he gave it up. It happened afterwards, in course of time, that the King expressed so much displeasure to Goda, that he gave him in an account of the deeds and lands which he possessed. And the King, therefore, delivered him and all his privileges, with the deeds and lands, to Edgifa, to dispose of as she pleased. Then she said, that she dared not, for fear of God, so retaliate on him as he had deserved of her; and she restored to him all his lands, except two caracutes at Osterland. But she would not return the deeds until she knew how far he would abide by them in respect to the lands which were to be his." These were, doubtless, the lands held by mortgage from Sighelm; and that Edgifa understood the character of the man whom she had to oppose in this legal contest, is evident by the subsequent events, as the will itself declares, to which we shall have occasion to advert hereafter.

Edgifa had two sons by Edward, Edmund and Edred, and two daughters. Of the second marriage one son remained, and six daughters. Of the first, Athelstan and Beatrice, who were educated at a distance from Edward's court, under the care of his sister, the Lady of Mercia; there, though separated from their step-mother Edgifa, they preserved a tender affection for her, and for the numerous offspring of Edward, their father; of which many proofs occurred after the death of the King.<sup>1</sup>

Edward, in the careful education of his children, followed the example of his father's wisdom. His daughters have been compared to those of Charlemagne, with whom a similar course was adopted. Their early years were devoted to the acquirement of solid knowledge, and the accomplishments prized at the period were theirs; nor was the use of the distaff and spindle neglected by the Princesses; so that their minds and bodies were always occupied—the surest method by which good conduct can be preserved. Very precious and elaborate specimens in "raiments of wrought needlework" and early English embroidery, are said to have been produced by the diligence of these "King's daughters."<sup>2</sup>

The sons of Edward had equal means afforded them of gaining the information necessary to constitute good princes.

A story is related of Eadburga, the youngest of Edgifa's daughters,

<sup>1</sup> Turner's Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>2</sup> The skill of the daughters of Edward in spinning and weaving is praised in the highest terms by our historians, and they were likewise instructed with the greatest possible care in the art of needlework: so renowned was their talent with the distaff that the term "spinster" is said to have been derived from these royal ladies. With such noble examples before them for contemplation, it is not to be wondered that we learn that the leisure hours of the Saxon women (even of the first rank) were spent in spinning and such like servile employments; neither was it any dishonor for the lady of the house to be among her maids, helping them and performing the duties of the house in common with them, while the lord was with his men, assisting and overlooking them; many instances of which may be brought to prove the ancient simplicity and plainness of their manners.—*Strutt's Saxon Antiquities.*

when only three years of age. The princess was led by her father into a room; in which the King had previously placed in one part a quantity of rings and bracelets; and a chalice, with a book of the Gospels, in another. The child was desired by her father to make her choice between them, when disregarding the vain ornaments of a transitory existence, she ran to those objects dedicated to religion. Edward, tracing in the infantine act a predilection for the service of Heaven, exclaimed with fervour, as he clasped her in his arms, "Go whither the Divine Spirit calls thee: follow with happy footsteps the spouse whom thou hast chosen!"<sup>1</sup> Accordingly the royal child was consigned to the care of her grandmother, Queen Elswitha, who resided at the convent at Winchester. She dwelt, for many years after, among that holy sisterhood, distinguishing herself by acts of piety and humility.<sup>2</sup> Monkish chroniclers relate of her rare humility, that "she would at night, secretly remove the socks<sup>3</sup> worn by the several nuns, and after having washed and *carefully anointed* them, replace them on the beds of her sleeping companions."<sup>4</sup> Long after her death, the acts of Eadburga were fondly recounted by the religious of the nunneries of Winchester, and Pershore in Worcestershire, at which last place her "sacred relics had been deposited, but were afterwards exhumed by Bishop Ethelwold and placed in a rich shrine, the Abbess Elfreda having covered them with gold and silver."

A. D. 925.—At the time of Edward's death he was residing at "Farn-don, in Mercia,"<sup>5</sup> which is by some supposed to be Faringdon, in Berkshire.<sup>6</sup> A few days later the King was followed to the tomb by Prince Ethelwerd, the son of Elfreda, his former Queen. Both father and son were interred with regal solemnity in the New Monastery of Winchester,

<sup>1</sup> William of Malmesbury.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard.

<sup>3</sup> *Socca*, or socks, were sometimes made of leather, as it appears these of the nuns were, by the "anointing" mentioned.

<sup>4</sup> "In the eighth and ninth centuries, the Anglo-Saxons wore stockings reaching halfway up the thigh, called by writers of the period "*hose*;" the most general material being linen, although "*skin hose*" and "*leather hose*" are likewise often mentioned. Over these stockings bands of cloth, linen, and leather, were worn, commencing at the ankle and terminating a little below the knee, generally bound round the leg like the haybands of a modern ostler, but sometimes crossing each other, as they are worn to this day by the people of the Abruzzi and the Appenines. In some illuminations of the period a sort of half-stocking is represented over the hose, instead of the bandages, having the tops generally embroidered, and these appear to have been called *socca*, or socks. They wore boots or buskins, but generally shoes (*sceo* or *scho*); slippers also appear to have been worn, called *slype-sceo* and *unhege-sceo*. The shoe is mostly painted down the instep, secured by a thong, the material being commonly leather, but the Anglo-Saxon princes and high ecclesiastical dignitaries are often represented with shoes of gold covered with precious stones. The shoemaker's seems to have been a comprehensive trade, and to have united some that are now very distinct businesses. He says in an ancient Anglo-Saxon dialogue: "My craft is very useful and necessary to you. I buy hides and skins, and prepare them by my art, and make of them shoes of various kinds, and none of you can winter without my craft." He subjoins a list of the articles he fabricates: — "Ankle-leathers, shoes, leather hose, bottles, bridle thongs, trappings, flasks, boiling vessels, leather neck-pieces, halters, wallets, and pouches."

<sup>5</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>6</sup> Lysons's Mag. Brit.; Holinshed, Raleigh.



near the remains of Alfred the Great, whom Ethelwerd is said to have greatly resembled in person, manners, and literary attainments. The double loss must have fallen heavily on the bereaved Queen and her family. Ethelwerd, the deceased Prince, had been a youth of great hopes, and perhaps Edward had anticipated his early death; for a few days before he expired, he summoned Athelstan to his presence, and having declared his desire that he should succeed him on the throne, piously admonished him as to his future conduct and mode of government. Thus Edgifa beheld Athelstan, the son of the shepherdess Egwina, raised by his father's will to the throne, in preference to her sons Edmund and Edred, still infants, as well as to the exclusion of Edwin, the surviving brother of Ethelwerd. The choice of Edward seems to have been grounded in this instance on the predilection of his father, the wise Alfred, for this his favourite grandchild, and Athelstan was accordingly crowned, with but one dissenting voice, at Kingston.<sup>1</sup>

It was the first care of Athelstan to provide for the future welfare of the numerous family of the deceased King. Within the course of a few months, his sister Beatrice was given away in marriage, some think, sacrificed, to Sihtric, King of the Northumbrian Danes, who was only baptized on the occasion, and died within a year, when much confusion ensued for the succession.

The first and third daughters of Elfleda, Edward's second Queen, devoted themselves to a life of celibacy: these were Edfleda, "who assumed the sacred robes of a nun; and Ethelhilda, who continued to wear a humble lay habit: both renounced the pleasures of this world, and were at their death interred near the remains of their mother at Winchester." Their sister Edgifa was married, during King Edward's life, to Charles the Simple, King of France, and the same year of Athelstan's accession, returned an exile with her son, and placed herself under the protection of the English King.

Edgifa is said to have been distinguished above her sisters for merit and genius. Through the treason of Robert, Count de Vermandois, Charles the Simple had been imprisoned in the Castle of Peronne; while Raoul, son of Richard, Duke of Burgundy, caused himself to be proclaimed King, and crowned at Soissons, A. D. 923, though he acted only as Regent during Charles's imprisonment. Edgifa had made every possible effort to procure the release of her husband, but in vain. She fled to secure her son's life, and after a six years' captivity, the unfortunate Charles died in his prison, worn out with sorrow and misery.

Edgifa returned in sorrow to the home of her childhood, and continued to reside there with her son Louis.

Henry I., son of Conrad, King of the Germans, and Emperor of the Romans, had demanded for his son Otho, a sister of Athelstan in marriage. The English King had four sisters, available alike in beauty, though of dissimilar ages, two of whom he sent to the Emperor; these were Edgifa and Elgiva, children of Elfleda. The Emperor Henry bestowed the former on his own son Otho, who succeeded him in the

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<sup>1</sup> Athelstan is said to have first worn a crown of pure gold.



empire, so that the Princess became eventually Empress of Germany. Her sister Elgifa was given in marriage by her father-in-law, the Emperor Henry,<sup>1</sup> to a personage who is always named as "a Duke who resided near the Alps." Where this undefined locality might be, historians, copying each other, are content to remain ignorant.

Another of the daughters of Edward was given by Athelstan to Louis, Prince of Aquitaine.

The numerous daughters of Edward the Elder may be thus enumerated :

Beatrice, Queen of Northumberland, wife of Sihtric.

Edfleda, and Ethelhilda, nuns.

Edgifa, Queen of Charles the Simple.

Edgifa, wife of Otho, Empress of Germany.

Elgiva, married to "a Duke near the Alps."

Edgiva, wife of Louis, King of Aquitaine.

Elfleda, wife of Louis, King of Provence.

Eadburga, nun at Winchester; and

Edilda, married to Hugh the Great, Count of Paris.

The affairs of France remaining unchanged, it became the policy of Athelstan to reconcile himself with the successful ruler.<sup>2</sup> Charles the Simple was still in captivity, and Hugh the Great, called Count of Paris, was all powerful. Negotiations were, therefore, entered into for the marriage of his youngest sister Edilda.

Adulf of Flanders, grandson of King Alfred, through his daughter Elswitha, and nephew of Athelstan, conducted the embassy, and in the name of Hugh, brought over an immense number of precious gifts, which he displayed before the nobles at Abingdon.

These presents consisted of Oriental spices, hitherto unknown in England, brilliant gems, especially emeralds, many fleet horses, and other gifts worthy of being more especially described.<sup>3</sup> Amongst them, "a vase composed of onyx, and sculptured with such a subtle artistic hand, that as it was looked upon, the harvest-field portrayed upon it seemed to incline in waving bends upon its surface, the vines to bud forth, as if with a rich germinating juice, and its engraven men to move, as if endowed with life; whilst its shining and polished surface reflected, as if it were a mirror, the mimic face and form of the beholder." Another present was "the sword of Constantine the Great, bearing the name of that Emperor, inscribed in letters of gold; while upon its pommel, rising up above the rich plates of gold, was to be seen one of the four nails used in the crucifixion." This valuable gift was accompanied with the lance of Charlemagne, used in his wars against the Saracens, and the famous pennon which had belonged to that Emperor, by whom it was displayed in his war in Spain. "A diadem, rich with thick gold and precious jewels, the lustre of which dazzled the eyes of the beholders." A particle of the true cross, enclosed in crystal, and of the crown of thorns,

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Lappenberg.

<sup>3</sup> William of Malmesbury.

encased in a similar manner, were also among the offerings of the princely suitor.

Athelstan received the bearers of these treasures with great courtesy, and having accepted the proposal of Hugh for the Princess his sister, directed that the holy cross and sacred crown should be deposited in the Abbey of Malmesbury.<sup>1</sup>

Edilda, said to have been the most beautiful of all the sisters, was united to Hugh the Great, A. D. 926: this was a tie which doubly united the nations of France and England, and entailed singular consequences; for when Charles the Simple died, A. D. 929, at the castle of Peronne, two competitors alone remained for the French crown, the Count de Vermandois and Hugh the Great.

At this time, the abilities of Edilda's sister, the exiled Queen Edgifa, were once more called into action. She resolved to make one more effort in behalf of her child, in whom she hoped to see the royal line restored. She applied to William, Duke of Normandy, a generous prince, allied by blood to the royal family of France, and who saw in the enterprise much advantage to be gained to himself. The Duke by his credit with the French nobles, engaged them to recall Louis. The French, either from love to their ancient masters, or fearing the troubles which the competition of Herbert and Hugh would cause, sent deputies to England, to bring back the son of Edgifa. This princess, rendered cautious by experience, hesitated before delivering the young Louis into the hands of the deputies, at the head of whom was William, Archbishop of Sens. She exacted from him, in his own name, and that of the nobles and the nation, not only hostages, but a promise to be more faithful to him than they had been to Charles the Simple: the conditions were accepted, and the Princess gave up her son; nor had she cause to repent it. Edgifa herself accompanied him in triumph to Boulogne, where, on their arrival, they were met by Hugh the Great and other French nobles, who united in taking the oath of fealty to him, and received him with every demonstration of joy, while the people sincerely rejoiced in the return of their sovereign. The sincerity of the nobles at this juncture is, however, questionable; for Edgifa is said to have returned to England, to obtain succours from her brother, King Athelstan, and herself heading the forces, a complete revolution was effected; Louis was triumphantly placed upon the throne, and peace restored to the kingdom. The spectacle was thus afforded of the grand-daughter of the Great Alfred heroically emulating her ancestor, by leading an army composed of English and French indifferently. Louis, only seventeen years of age, was proclaimed King at Boulogne, and afterwards conducted to Laon to be crowned, which ceremony was performed on the 20th of June, A. D. 936, by Artold, Archbishop of Rheims, in presence of more than twenty bishops, Hugh the Great, and the rest of the nobility of France. There is no reason to doubt that both the widowed Queen of Charles, and her sister Edilda, the wife of Hugh, were present at this triumphant ending of long disappointments. The coronation was rendered still more interesting by the

<sup>1</sup> William of Malmesbury.

marriage, at the same time, of Louis to his young cousin Gerberga, daughter of the Emperor Otho.<sup>1</sup>

Edgifa finding the nobles sought to govern in her son's name, and that, fearing she might obtain the regency, they were opposed to her residing in France, retired into England, where she remained at Athelstan's court till 938, when Louis, who resided at Laon, sent for her to assist him with her advice. She therefore returned to the court of Louis d'Outremer,—for so he was called from his sojourn in England. In France, however, Edgifa became involved in a new series of troubles, from her too open friendship with the House of Vermandois, always odious and displeasing to the reigning family. With singular imprudence, she allowed herself to become attached to Herbert,<sup>2</sup> the second son of that Count of Vermandois who had made her husband his prisoner at Peronne, where he died.

So offended and jealous was Louis at his mother's conduct, that he caused her residence at Laon to resemble a sort of honourable imprisonment. At last she contrived to escape from her guardians there, and some time after, although she had attained a mature age, married her youthful lover Herbert, then only twenty, at St. Quentin, for which act her son dispossessed her of the royal revenues she had so long enjoyed.<sup>3</sup> The following year, Edgifa gave birth to a son, Stephen of Troyes, but died in 953, in her confinement with a daughter, the Princess Agnes of Lorraine. Such was the fate of the sister of Athelstan, her son's policy inducing so much harshness to a mother to whom he owed his crown, his early safety, and careful education.

Lothaire, the grandson of Edgifa by Louis d'Outremer and Gerberga, succeeded his father at the end of a long reign of thirty-eight years, and was followed by another son of his own, Louis the Fifth, the last of the Carolingian race; but during the reigns of these three nominal kings, the real power was held by Hugh the Great, who had married Edilda, and afterwards by their son, Hugh Capet, who, on the death of Louis the Fifth, seized the crown, A. D. 987, being the first sovereign of that royal house whose late misfortunes resemble those of the Stuarts. From Hugh Capet, was lineally descended Eleanor de Montfort, the wife of Llewelyn, the last of the Welsh Princes, from whom Henry VII. claimed his maternal descent.

The widowed Edgifa, Queen of Edward the Elder, during all these changes of fortune, was still unable to establish her claim to her patrimonial inheritance. After her husband died, the dispute was renewed, as we learn from the statement in the Queen's will, to which we return, as it runs through the web of this complicated history: "Then King Edward died, and Athelstan came to the throne. Then Goda, availing himself of the opportunity, went to King Athelstan, and besought him to require of Edgifa the restoration of his deeds, which he did; and she restored him all, except the deeds of Osterland; and he with his own hand released to her that paper (or deed), and humbly gave her thanks

<sup>1</sup> De Menin's Treatise on the Anointing and Coronation of the Kings and Queens of France.

<sup>2</sup> Historic Anecdotes.

<sup>3</sup> Rivalité de la France et de l'Angleterre.

for the rest, and moreover he gave her his oath that the compact should stand good to her children, born and unborn, for ever. And this was done in the sight of Athelstan and of his nobles, at —, near Lewes. And Edgifa held the land and deeds during the lives of his two sons, who succeeded him.”<sup>1</sup>

On the death of Athelstan, after a sixteen years’ reign, A. D. 941, the Queen of Edward the Elder had the satisfaction of beholding her eldest son Edmund raised to the throne, who had obtained the surname of “the Pious.” The new monarch was then in the twentieth year of his age,<sup>2</sup> having been only four years old at the time his father died. The coronation took place at Kingston; and the same year, 941, Edmund was united to Elfgiva, by whom he became father of Edwy and Edgar, who afterwards sat on the throne. The birth of this last prince, in 943, took place at a vill close by Glastonbury, which from that circumstance derived the name Edgarlei, which it still retains. At the time Prince Edgar was born, St. Dunstan is said to have heard voices which seemed high up in the air, and which sounded as if intoning a psalm and giving utterance to these words: “Peace shall prevail amid the Church of the English during the time of the boy who has been born, and of our Dunstan.”<sup>3</sup>

Glastonbury was especially favoured by Edmund. It is said that one day, when the King was out hunting, he set forward with his dogs in advance of his suite in the pursuit of a herd of deer which had been roused by their horns, and that stag and hounds, reaching a steep precipice, plunged into the abyss and were dashed to pieces; the King, eager in the chase, dashed after them so furiously that he was unable to check his horse, and on the moment when death stared him in the face, he uttered a mental prayer that if he could be saved, St. Dunstan, whom alone of all people living he had injured, should receive ample compensation. The horse arrived on the very edge of the precipice, stopped suddenly,<sup>4</sup> and the King’s life was saved, as he believed, by the intercession of the holy man. Returned home, Edmund sent for Dunstan, and commanded him to ride with him to Glastonbury. There, having first offered up his prayers, Edmund took Dunstan by the right hand and led him to the sacerdotal throne, on which he placed him with these words:—“Be thou the Prince in this place, its potent possessor, and the most faithful abbot of this church; and whatsoever may be here wanting to thee, either for the advancement and increase of divine worship, or for the sustentation and administration of the sacred monastic rule, I will, with a devout heart and royal munificence, supply thee.” Dunstan accordingly laid the foundation of a glorious church, and as soon as the building was completed, assembled in it a company of monks. Edmund bestowed a charter of privilege on the abbey, A. D. 944. This charter was inscribed in golden letters in a copy of the Evangelists, presented by Edmund to the church, a beautiful illustration of Saxon art. In the charter, after the King had

<sup>1</sup> Lives of the Saints.

<sup>2</sup> Turner says eighteen: Antiquities of Glastonbury.

<sup>3</sup> Flor. Wigorn.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



signed his own name, the following persons attested the deed, Eadred, the King's brother, and Edgifa, his mother, in these words: "I, Edgifa, mother of the King, have confirmed the aforesaid gift."<sup>1</sup>

As the signature of the King's wife is not there, this grant probably took place after the decease of that most excellent woman, whose remains were interred at Shipton, or Shaftesbury,<sup>2</sup> and she became venerated as a saint for her many virtues. Her solicitude for the relief of the indigent, and charity in procuring the liberty of slaves, are particularly noticed by our monkish chroniclers, whose pages are filled with testimonials to her goodness. Of her, William of Malmesbury declares: "She was a woman always intent on good works, endowed with such piety and sweetness, as privately to redeem prisoners, and readily to bestow on the poor even her most precious garments. This Queen is said to have been remarkable for the beauty of her person, and so skilful, and admirable in the works wrought by her hands, according to the fashion of her times, that even envy itself, finding no fault, was compelled to praise. Malmesbury assures us that St. Elfgifa was not only eminent for her virtues during life, but for her miracles after death. He declares that she was favoured with the gift of prophecy, and in his work entitled "*De Gestis Pontificum*" may be seen an account of the miracles of this Queen, originally in metre, but written there in prose, and according to the author's own statement, when "he was young," before A.D. 1125.<sup>3</sup>

One of these miracles is thus given, but as it concerns Edgar, her youngest son, who could have been only an infant, either the good Queen must have survived the date usually assigned as that of her death, for many years, or else it must have been performed by her step-mother Queen Edgifa. The widow of Edward the Elder was so popular with the English, that many of the subsequent Queens of England, till Emma of Normandy, who died shortly before the Conquest, assumed hers as a sort of surname in addition to their own; thus Emma was called Emma Elfgiva,<sup>4</sup> or the "Help-Giver." The legend stands thus:—

<sup>1</sup> Hearne *Monasticon*, vol. i.; Warner.

<sup>2</sup> The Monastery of Shaftesbury is said to have been built by Elfgiva, Queen of Edmund, in conjunction with her son Edgar, for nuns, and at her death she was not only interred there, but miracles are said to have been afterwards wrought at her tomb. Shaftesbury, once a village, but now a city, was built on the declivity of a hill, and a stone, transferred from an old wall to the chapter-house of the monastery, had this inscription:—"In the year of our Lord's incarnation, 880, King Alfred, in the eighth year of his reign, founded this city." Some say that Elfgiva did not die till 971 or 972, and that in the last of these dates she attested a charter to Glastonbury. In the days of Malmesbury and Ethelwerd miracles were still worked at the tomb of St. Elfgiva. "She was much afflicted by her wicked son Edwy, but comforted by his brother Edgar. God was pleased, for some years before her death, to try her with long and tedious illnesses, with which she was purified like gold in the furnace, and fitted for the heavenly palaces, to which she was called A. D. 971. Her festival is celebrated on the 18th of May, according to *Britannia Sancta*, which calls her the mother of Edwy and Edgar."

<sup>3</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Miraculæ S. Elfgifæ*.

<sup>4</sup> It will have been observed that the letters *f* and *v* are used indifferently in Saxon.

Edgar one day, out hunting, pursued the chase to the extremity of the forest, and alighting there to await his friends, threw himself on the ground beneath the shade of a wild apple-tree beside a stream, where he fell asleep. A female hound, apparently large with whelp, came to rest at the monarch's feet, and aroused the sleeper. The hound was mute, but the whelps within barked as if for joy. The surprised King, raising his eyes, beheld two apples successively fall into the stream, which in doing so caused a sound to be emitted from the splashing bubbles of the disturbed waters, resembling the words, "Well is thee! well is thee!"<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the King perceived a small empty pitcher, followed by a large one filled with water, floating down the stream, and as if the waters were like to a whirlpool, the larger strove to empty its contents into the smaller one, but without success, for it escaped empty from every such attempt, though it dashed saucily against the side of the larger vessel.

On Edgar's return, he sought his mother, to whom he knew God had revealed many things, and desired the meaning of what he had seen. The Queen directed her son to tranquillize his mind, and having delayed her reply till the following morning, addressed her son in these words:—

"The barking of the whelps, while the mother was quiescent, signifies that those who are now in power and doing well (though evil-disposed), will remain silent; but that, after thy death, worthless, wicked, debauched spendthrifts, as yet unborn, will be found to arise and bark against God's Church.

"As to the one apple falling in quick succession after the other, so that from their collision as they fell a sound was emitted, which seemed to convey the words, 'Well is thee,' this signifies, that from thee, who are now as a tree shading all England, shall issue two sons; and those who favour the pretensions of the second shall destroy the first, and then the promoters of their opposing parties shall say of each of the young Princes, 'Well is thee,' because he who is dead shall be reigning in heaven, and he who is living shall be reigning in this world.

"Then as to the larger pitcher not being able to fill up the smaller with its contents, that is intended to designate the nations of the Northmen, which are more numerous than the English, and who will, after thy death, attack England; and although they will make many attempts to supply the losses suffered in their ranks, by fresh accessions of their compatriots, shall never be able to fill up with their soldiers this corner of the world. On the contrary, our Angles, even when they seem to be most completely subdued, will have vigour and strength enough to expel them, and the land shall be theirs, as it is in accordance with the will of God, and so shall remain until the time pre-appointed by Christ."<sup>2</sup>

Edmund married a second wife, as we learn from the Saxon Chronicle, who survived him; this second consort was Elfeda of Damerham, daughter of Ealdorman Elgar,<sup>3</sup> who adopted the name of Edgifa, in consequence of which circumstance great confusion occurs, in the Chronicles

<sup>1</sup> "Wel his the."

<sup>2</sup> William of Malmesbury; Gest. Pont. Ang

<sup>3</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

attributing to one Queen the acts of the other, so that it is difficult to distinguish them.

When only in his twenty-fifth year, A.D. 946, the young monarch Edmund was slain by a robber, named Leolf, at Puckle-kirk, in Gloucestershire,<sup>1</sup> on the occasion of his celebrating the mass-day of St. Augustine, which was customary with the Saxons.

Edmund had formerly enacted some severe laws against thieves, and pecuniary punishments proving inefficient, had commanded that the oldest in every gang should suffer the extreme penalty of death.<sup>2</sup> This was the first time that the life of man had been taken for theft, and it cost Edmund his own.

Leolf was a notorious robber, banished for his crimes. He suddenly presented himself to the King, forcing his way into the palace, whence Edmund indignantly ordered him to be expelled; he fiercely resisted the cup-bearer, to whom the order was given, and who endeavoured to obey the royal mandate. On this, the exasperated monarch rushed on Leolf and seized him by the hair, when the robber drew his dagger and stabbed the youthful prince to the heart. Edmund did not die instantly, but the wound in his breast proved mortal. The assassin was despatched forthwith by the royal attendants.<sup>3</sup>

Edmund the Pious, after a short reign of six years,<sup>4</sup> thus died in 946, leaving his two children so young, that in a council held to settle the succession, they were adjudged unfit to reign, and the crown awarded to their uncle Edred.

It was in the reign of Edmund, the son of the sainted Edgifa, that the celebrated Reay Cross, or Ray Cross, was placed on Stanmore, on the confines of Westmoreland and Yorkshire, bearing upon it the *arms of England and Scotland sculptured on the opposite sides*. It was erected in testimony of Edmund's grant of Cumberland (which district he had obtained by the conquest of Dunmaile, its King) to Malcolm, King of Scots, on the condition that Malcolm should hold it of him, and protect the northern parts of England by sea and land against hostile incursions. From this circumstance the eldest sons of the Scottish monarchs from that time were styled "Governors of Cumberland,"<sup>5</sup> and the Cross was placed as a memorial of the divisions of the two kingdoms.

Queen Edgifa is frequently noticed during the reign of her younger son Edred. Having heard that St. Ethelwold, Abbot of Glastonbury, had resolved to go to France to study the Holy Scriptures, the Queen, considering the Prelate's absence would be no small loss to the kingdom, prevailed upon her son to stay his journey, and make him Abbot of Abingdon in Berkshire. She assured Edred that Ethelwold had not only wisdom enough to suffice for himself, but to guide others, and that he needed not to seek in foreign lands for what he possessed already, and she begged him not to let so great a man depart the country; the King was delighted to hear this assurance from his mother, and acted on her suggestion.<sup>6</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> SAXON Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Hume, Raleigh, Lingard.

<sup>3</sup> Camden's Britannia, 1594.

<sup>4</sup> Rapin.

<sup>5</sup> Britton and Brayley.

<sup>6</sup> Wolstan Vit. S. Ethelwold.



was Edred who, in the latter part of his reign, repaired the Abbey of Abingdon, which had been built by King Ina, but had fallen to decay and ruin.<sup>1</sup> In this great undertaking the Abbot and monks were assisted by grants of money from the royal treasures, and the most material benefit was conferred upon them by the donations of the Queen-Mother.

Ethelwold, who by Edgifa's influence had been made Abbot of Abingdon, was afterwards made Bishop of Winchester.

At the time when Edred was endeavouring to persuade his friend and adviser Dunstan, Abbot of Glastonbury, to accept the see of Winchester, which he had declined, as being unfit for it, Edred entreated his mother, Queen Edgifa, to invite the prelate to dinner and add her persuasions. "I know," said the King, "dearest mother and Queen of the broad empire of the English, that our mutual friend Dunstan loves you the most of living beings, and that he takes an especial delight in the good works that you do; because, whatever he counsels you for the sake of eternal life to perform, that you are sure willingly to accomplish, whether it be in giving alms for the subsistence of the poor, or in the bestowal of donations for the advancement of churches.<sup>2</sup> Therefore is it, that I have confident hope that if you beseech him to do that which it is becoming in me to ask, and in him to perform, he cannot justly refuse a compliance with your request. It is a thing perfectly manifest to all persons, that he ought to hold the highest rank in the priesthood. This is as plain to us as that we are his inferiors in wisdom, and in all that duly merits honour and respect in this life, as we are sure that he who is King of the English is a more powerful monarch than any of the other kings of the earth. Address him, then, with that winning eloquence which belongs to women: struggle, in order that the grace which you have obtained in his eyes, may gain from the servant of God a compliance which cannot but tend to aid in releasing us from the bonds of sin."

The Queen-Mother, in obedience to the words of her son, invited Dunstan to come to her, and sought, by her arguments, to induce him to relax in his resolution, but he remained unmoved. "I am unwilling," said he, "lady, that thou shouldst ask of me aught that it would hurt my conscientious feelings to concede, or the refusal to concede which may give offence to thee. I am not ignorant how difficult it is for each of us to plead his cause before the tribunal of Christ, much less how difficult it will be for a man to obtain an acquittal in those cases in which he has acted as the adviser or the judge of others. If, however, these considerations cannot produce any impression upon thy mind, I would desire to add another, and such as may be esteemed that which mainly must prevent me from receiving a bishopric. I see that my lord, the King, suffers under a constant languor, that his life is endangered by it, that he cannot endure to be parted from me for a moment, because he has made me as if the father of a sovereign, and the master of an entire kingdom."

As the Queen-Mother still persisted in urging him to accept the mitre, notwithstanding his repeated refusals, he, somewhat agitated, said to her

<sup>1</sup> Magna Brit.

<sup>2</sup> Lives of the Saints.



"Most assuredly, the episcopal mitre shall never cover my brows in the days of this thy son."<sup>1</sup>

From this conversation Dunstan departed, with his mind much agitated. The next day, however, he informed the King that, after his interview with Edgifa, he had, on his return home, beheld a vision of St. Peter, who struck him, saying, "This is the punishment for your refusal, and a token to you not to decline hereafter the primacy of England." The King, not perceiving his friend's artifice, who desired to be all or none, interpreted the vision to his own mind, asserting that it foretold he was to be Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>2</sup>

In 955, the death of Edred deprived Edgifa of her son, and Dunstan of a firm friend. His nephew Edwy, eldest son of Edmund, succeeded him, a prince then in his sixteenth year. He not only manifested an open antipathy to the clergy, but deprived many prelates of their benefices, and even went so far as to banish Dunstan from the kingdom. These measures gave great umbrage to the people; but they were still more displeased, and loudly and vehemently did they express their indignation, when they beheld the manner in which Edwy treated his aged grandmother, the venerable Queen Edgifa. Upon some unknown pretext, she was despoiled of all she possessed, and reduced to a state of indigence and privacy.<sup>3</sup> Eadmer, writing of the injuries Edwy inflicted on his grandmother, says, "*He afflicted immensely his mother, the glory of all England, the consoler of churches, and the supporter of the oppressed*, and after having taken away from her the property belonging to her, cruelly and barbarously degraded her from her previous dignity." For this ill-treatment no other cause is apparent than the favour with which the Queen had always regarded the clergy.

As regards her patrimonial estate, we find that the Queen's own Charter runs thus:—"At length Edred died, and Edgifa was despoiled of her whole inheritance. When Leofric and Leofstan, the two sons of Goda, seized from Edgifa the two aforesaid lands at Cowling and at Osterland, and said to the young Edwy, who had then been elected, that they were more rightfully theirs than hers. And so it was settled until Edgar." The reign of the oppressor was, however, prematurely brought to a close. The people rebelled against Edwy, and placed his brother Edgar, a boy of twelve years of age, on the throne, which caused Edwy to die of grief soon after.

Edgar was no sooner made king than he annulled all the oppressive acts of the preceding government. Attention was forthwith paid to the injuries of Edgifa, who now recovered her often-disputed patrimony.<sup>4</sup> The Queen's Charter says of King Edgar, that "he and his nobles decreed that they (viz. Leofric and Leofstan, the sons of Goda) had committed a wicked robbery, and they decreed the inheritance to be hers, and had it restored. Then Edgifa received by the King's permission, and in presence of him and all his bishops, the said deeds, and laying her hand on the altar, gave the land to the Church of Christ, viz., to the convent

<sup>1</sup> Osbern, Vit. St. Dunstan; Acta Sancta; Aug. Sacra.

<sup>2</sup> Turner's Anglo-Saxons.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

(of Christ's Church at Canterbury), and for the quiet of her soul; and denounced that Christ, with the whole assembly of heaven, would bring evil on him for ever, who should at any time pervert or make void this bequest. Thus this inheritance came to the convent of the Church of Christ." No doubt the harassed Queen saw that this was the only plan of securing the property, as the Church would guard its own.

Appended to an antique picture of Queen Edgifa are the following lines commemorative of her donations to the Church; in it her name is written, as is sometimes the case in our old authors, Eddeva or Edyve:—

"Edyve, the good queene and noble mother  
To Ethelstane, Edmund, and Eldred,  
Kinges of England, every each after other,  
To Christ's Church of Canterbury did give indeed,  
Monketon and Thorndenn, the monkes there to feede;  
Meyham, Cleene, Cowlinge, Osterland,  
East Farleugh, and Lenham, as we beeleve;  
The yeare Dom. MLXI. of Christ's incarnation."

In the subscriptions of King Edgar's Charter of Privilege to Hyde Abbey, by Winchester, which is yet remaining in the valuable library of Sir Robert Cotton, are contained also the signatures of Elfrida, that monarch's queen, and Edgifa, his aged grandmother. They are written in letters of gold, in a hand of that age: "Ego Edgifu, prædicti regis avia hoc opus egregiam crucis taumate consolidavi." Selden observes that Edgifa durst not style herself any other than "the king's grandmother," on account of the law passed in Wessex through the crimes of Eadburga; for so "avia," as well as "avea," denoted, of which many instances in those times are on record.

Edgifa died August 25th, A. D. 963.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Notes to Lye's Saxon Dictionary, whence the Queen's will has been extracted.

## ETHELGIVA,

### QUEEN OF EDWY THE FAIR.

Ethelgiva's relationship to the young Prince Edwy the Fair—Her extreme beauty—St. Dunstan's character and history—His contentions with the Devil; his temptations and triumphs—The fame of the Saint—St. Dunstan's mortification to find the young King married—The forced coronation—Flight of the King—Anger of the nobles—Rage of the Bishops—Discovery of the weeping Bride—Insults to Edwy and Ethelgiva—Passionate words of the Mother of the young Queen—Fury of Dunstan—Sympathy of the People for the Royal Pair—Ethelgiva refused the title of Queen—Edwy's dislike to the ambitious Prelate—The evil spirit at Glastonbury—Flight of Dunstan—His dangers from his enemies, the married priests—Security of the Royal Lovers—Seizure of Ethelgiva: horrible vengeance—She is sent to Ireland—Odo's representations to the King—His despair—His troubles—His brother Edgar—Recall of Dunstan—Divorce pronounced against Ethelgiva—Excommunication of Edwy—Recovery of Ethelgiva, and attempt to return—Waylaid on her journey—Hamstrung and starved to death—Broken heart of Edwy—He dies—Buried at Winchester.

THE history of Ethelgiva's life is a sad episode, and presents a picture of crime, cruelty, and bigotry rarely equalled in the annals of any country. She must have been of royal blood, as she is said to be so nearly allied to her husband that the fact furnished a pretext for the injuries inflicted upon her by her ruthless enemies. No narrative can more strongly illustrate the extraordinary power of the Church, and the persistence of its servants, than the tale of Edwy's persecuted wife. She is represented as so remarkably beautiful, that Edwy, prior to his accession, had been unable to resist the fascination of her charms, and is supposed to have married her in secret. On this step all the after misfortunes of the enamoured pair seem to have depended. The monkish writers who have told her story are generally desirous to avert blame from St. Dunstan, through whom the misfortunes of Ethelgiva arose, and it is their object to prove that no marriage whatever took place between the lovers; that Ethelgiva, her mother, was of infamous character, and that the conduct of Prince Edwy was worthy of all reprehension. That there was imprudence in the connection there can be no doubt, and it is possible that they might have been within the forbidden degrees of relationship; but nothing could excuse the extreme and persevering cruelty with which their fault, admitting it to have existed, was punished by the severe and haughty churchman whose will was resisted by the young King.

Perhaps the bitterness of St. Dunstan to the unfortunate pair may be better understood when the circumstances of his own life are considered.

The tender feelings he had once himself experienced might have been expected to cause him to look with indulgence on the natural weakness of youth ; instead of which the memory of his sacrifices seems to have rendered him fiercely severe and implacable in his resolution to root out every tendency to yield to the impulses of passion or affection. Whatever the failings of Edwy might be—and his subsequent conduct showed that he had many—the severity of St. Dunstan may be looked upon as having fostered instead of correcting them.

Dunstan was born of a noble Saxon family, at the beginning of the reign of Athelstan.<sup>1</sup> His precocious talents induced his parents to send him for instruction to a famous school at Glastonbury, where his remarkable genius soon developed itself. His bodily health was infirm, but his mental powers were extraordinary. Not only in abstruse learning was he soon distinguished, but in all the lighter literature, such as “heroic poetry, songs and ballads,” which was then highly prized. His influential friend Wulfhelm, Archbishop of Canterbury, introduced him at the court of Athelstan ; but his haughty and contemptuous bearing, as well as his superiority, gained him more enemies than friends, and the absurd charge of magic was brought forward against him by the jealous ignorance which could not comprehend his amazing information. He was waylaid and attacked by enemies, by whom he was maltreated and left for dead, having been cast into a bog. From this, however, he escaped, was received by a relative, the Bishop of Winchester, and counselled by him to devote himself to a monastic life.

But the world still had charms for the accomplished Dunstan, and he next appears living altogether in the society of, and protected by, a rich matron of royal descent, named Ethelflaed, cultivating the arts of music, painting, and sculpture, in all of which he excelled ;<sup>2</sup> his works in metal, such as bells, crucifixes, and censers, were of admirable execution. His fame continued to increase, and reports of miracles performed by him became current. King Athelstan and his court came to visit Ethelflaed and her celebrated guest, and showed him great honour. A miracle he then performed was bruited abroad ; it was asserted, that through his power, no sooner had the royal cupbearers poured out the mead from their vessels than they found them instantly filled anew.

At this time, it seems, the heart of the learned Dunstan became the prey of beauty, and he passionately loved a fair maiden from whom Wulfhelm, the Bishop of Canterbury, was anxious to separate him. His reason appears to have been disturbed by the struggles of his mind on this occasion, for his resistance to advice and entreaty was long and resolute. At length the Bishop had recourse to prayer, and implored Heaven that some worldly misfortune might cause him to see the path of duty with more clearness. The evil prayed for arrived, perhaps either in the death or infidelity of her he loved. Dunstan was seized with a dangerous fever, on recovering from which he had no longer any opposition to make to the

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<sup>1</sup> Turner, *Vita S. Dunstani*.

<sup>2</sup> Bridferth, Osbern, &c. In Hickee there is an engraving from one of St Dunstan's drawings, representing the Saviour.



proposal of his zealous relative ; and, considering himself called to the holy state, he embraced a monastic life at Glastonbury. Here he began a career of austerity before unparalleled ; <sup>1</sup> he built himself a cell too short to allow him to lie at length, and here he wrought at his forge, when not engaged in prayer : he slept little, and his food was almost too scanty to sustain nature. He believed that the Foul Fiend was always on the watch to surprise him, and he thought it necessary to be constantly on his guard against his attempts. Too much learning had no doubt made him mad, and fostered by his solitude, the malady became confirmed. All was, however, by his admiring and bigoted brethren imputed to him for holiness, and their wonder was daily fed by the miraculous tales they heard of devilish forms visiting the cell of Dunstan, and contending with that pious and holy recluse. The Fiend would sometimes thrust his head in at door or window, and insult his ears with profane and foul language. Once the Father of Ill ventured too far, and Dunstan, appearing not to observe him, waited until his tongs were red hot, when suddenly darting forward, he seized the tempter by the nose, who yelled so loud that the hideous noise was heard throughout the whole country.

The solution of this mystery probably is, that the ignorant monks were alarmed at the noise made by the fire in his furnaces, as he prepared the metals on which he wrought.

Every year the fame of Dunstan increased, till at length he was drawn from his retreat, and took up his permanent place at court as chief minister to King Edmund, having been previously made Abbot of Glastonbury, with an enormous revenue. His influence from this time knew no bounds, and his will was paramount in all things. When young Edwy, therefore, came to the crown, it was not likely that he would allow his power to be disputed, or surprising that he should desire to sweep from his path those who dared to oppose him. Of course, when so young a man as Edwy held supreme power, Dunstan expected to have still more authority, and nothing could exceed his anger when he found himself thwarted on the very threshold by the discovery of the King's marriage without his sanction. His representations, that Edwy should separate from Ethelgiva, were unattended to, and nothing but murmurs attended his command that she should not be admitted to a share in the solemnity of the coronation.

The ceremony was performed at Kingston, on a raised platform, in sight of all the people, Archbishop Odo officiating on the occasion. Edwy was remarkable for his handsome person, from which he was called *The Fair*, and was at the time only in his seventeenth year, a circumstance which might have called for leniency. A magnificent banquet, befitting such an occasion, had been prepared for Edwy and the Saxon nobles ; but while the latter were indulging in the rude and noisy merriment accompanying such entertainments, Edwy, watching his opportunity, escaped to society more congenial to his taste, perhaps rejoicing to be able thus to avoid the excessive drinking which was certain to form a feature at these festivals. The Saxon nobles, however, perceiving his

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<sup>1</sup> Lappenberg.

absence, were indignant at their entertainer showing them so little courtesy, and loudly expressed the displeasure they felt at the young King's forgetfulness of their dignity.<sup>1</sup> St. Dunstan and the prelate Kynsey were appointed by them "*to bring the King back to the festive board.*" These two ecclesiastics, equally offended with the Saxon nobles, accepted the mission, and angrily leaving the scene of festivity, with a suspicion of the cause of Edwy's absence, not a little irritated and incensed by the disrespect shown to themselves as representatives of the Church, in common with the other guests, but more especially from his acting thus against their known and expressed disapproval of the alliance into which Edwy had entered,—sought the retreat of the imprudent host.

Entirely throwing aside all respect or consideration, the two prelates burst into the apartment of the King, whom they found, as they had expected, in the company of his young wife and her mother. The King, forgetting in the happiness of the moment all but his escape from an irksome ceremony, had taken off and laid on one side the crown of state, that crown which he had not yet been able to share with the woman whom he loved, and was caressing Ethelgiva with fondness, and soothing her mortification at not partaking in the splendour he did not prize alone,—when these rude intruders invaded his privacy.

A most strange and unbecoming scene ensued. With violent language they insisted on the King's returning to the banquet, loading Ethelgiva and her mother with the bitterest threats and reproaches, and heaping on them the most insulting and opprobrious epithets; and then, resolving to accomplish their purpose, forcibly replaced the diadem on the head of Edwy, whom they dragged from his seat, and literally compelled to return with them to the revellers in the banqueting-hall.<sup>2</sup> This was no easy task; for the terrified women clung to him as to their protector, and force only constrained them to separate from him.

At this moment Ethelgiva, the mother of the young wife, turning her eyes on Dunstan, exclaimed in a burst of anger, "How unmeasurable must be the audacity of this man, who has thus ventured to intrude himself upon the privacy of a King! You have threatened me with death by strangulation, but I shall have you doomed to the mutilation of your limbs, and to perpetual banishment."<sup>3</sup>

These passionate words were fatal. Dunstan, enraged at the resistance and the confidence displayed, saw plainly that both the mother and daughter had obtained an influence over the heart of the young Edwy, which the monk had intended to appropriate; and as the elder was the most likely to bias the King in favour of her own views, Dunstan's rage seems to have been peculiarly directed, at this time, against her. It is thought that Dunstan was really ignorant of Edwy's actual marriage to the daughter of Ethelgiva, which may palliate in some degree the violence of his conduct, anxious as he was to prevent the union. On the other hand, the existence of such a tie, and the circumstance of Ethelgiva being denied the usual honours of Queen-Consort, may excuse the ambitious and indignant mother the fury of her resentment. We are told by

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Malmesbury, Wallingford, &c.

<sup>3</sup> Osbern.

some chroniclers that he was not married, and that on the coronation-day Ethelgiva and her mother visited Edwy, it being the object of the latter to persuade the King to marry "*one or the other of them*;"<sup>1</sup> but she probably desired him to proclaim his union to his subjects, and thus, without further delay, enable her daughter to wear the crown.<sup>2</sup> Edwy might have been too much in dread of the ecclesiastical authorities to disclose the important fact, and hence his anxiety to pacify both his wife and her mother. The powerful individuals who headed the combination against Edwy's marriage, on finding the tie really did exist, and that it was impossible to be prevented, directed their fury against both the young Queen and her mother, vilifying them in the most atrocious manner.

The conduct of Dunstan meanwhile, instead of producing the results he expected enlisted sympathy for Edwy and his Queen, and the ancient enemies of the proud Abbot were not slow to take advantage of the occasion. Ethelgiva was accepted as the wife of the sovereign, and the star of the prelate declined. Availing herself of Edwy's unconcealed dislike of Dunstan, the young and injured Queen hastened to take revenge, and by his consent, constituted herself mistress not only of all the property and title-deeds belonging to the community of Glastonbury, but of the personal property of Dunstan also; and, at the same time, a decree of instant banishment was issued against him by the King, upon charges from which he was unable to clear himself. The monkish chronicler proceeds to state, that at the time the persons sent to drive the brethren from their monastery were superintending the inventory of the ecclesiastical goods and property subjected to confiscation, there was heard, on the western side of the church, the harsh, ringing laugh of a demon, "which sounded like the wheezy voice of a gleesome hag." It was heard by St. Dunstan himself, and he responded to it in these words: "Foe to mankind, do not rejoice so much; for however great may be thy joy now in seeing my departure, thy grief will be twice as great when God, to thy confusion, shall permit my return." Dunstan saw no safety, for the present, but in flight; but scarcely had the vessel proceeded three miles from

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<sup>1</sup> Bridferth, Osbern, and Eadmer.

<sup>2</sup> Those writers who assert that Ethelgiva was not lawfully united to Edwy are supported by several modern authors of the Roman Catholic persuasion, as Dr. Lingard, Dr. Milner, &c. Hallam blames Dr. Henry for calling her Queen and a lawful wife, without intimating that the nature of her tie with Edwy was at the least considered equivocal. Dr. Lingard divides the writers on Ethelgiva's history into two classes — those who wrote before, and those who wrote after the Conquest. Of the first were Bridferth of Romsey, who is followed by Osbern and Eadmer. Neither of these last had, it appears, seen an ancient Life of Odo, written in Anglo-Saxon, Cott. MSS., in British Museum (Nero E. 1 b.), which has formed the groundwork of the later Lives of that prelate, and is another authority quoted by Dr. Lingard. A second Life of Odo is another source, of which the author, supposed to be either Eadmer or Osbern, is doubtful: it describes the coronation scene from Bridferth, and then turns to the ancient Life of Odo, the words of which it seems almost to adopt. The additions in this seem like an attempt to reconcile the narrative in the Life of Odo with the account of Osbern, as if the pages of both the latter were open before the writer at the time the MS. was written. Malmesbury wrote the story of Ethelgiva twenty or thirty years later



land, being bound for Flanders, where the exiled monk meant to take refuge, when the emissaries of Queen Ethelgiva's mother appeared on the beach, resolved on the destruction of Dunstan, had he remained but a few moments more on shore.

Another abbot was chosen amongst the enemies of Dunstan, Elsy being appointed to Glastonbury, and the abbey was filled with *married* priests, a state which he had resolutely extirpated amongst the clergy, its former community being all displaced. The downfall of Dunstan took place in 956, and was followed by that of other members of the Church, who, despoiled of their property, were driven into banishment.

The reaction of so great a triumph appears to have been too great for the mind of the youthful monarch, who now, surrounding himself with evil counsellors, and feeling his power unlimited, gave way to excesses, which, perhaps, but for the imprudent and injudicious fury of Dunstan, might never have been either in his wish or his reach. Rapacious favourites, young like himself, inexperienced and unprincipled, urged him to the most dangerous and impolitic acts. He despoiled monasteries, and seized possessions, making powerful enemies on all sides; but his chief crime was his conduct to his venerable grandmother, Edgiva, whom he deprived of all her possessions, as has been before related in her life.

The King's marriage had been *legal*<sup>1</sup> as far as the actual ceremony, but it was contrary to Church laws, Edwy and his wife being too nearly related, or "too sib," as the Chronicle has it; and consequently, as the Church would not recognise their union, an open war ensued between Church and State, the successive contests of which occupy the whole of this short and troubled reign.

Carried away by the stream of success, neither Edwy nor Ethelgiva allowed themselves to fear, and held their former enemies in contempt; but the unrestrained license of the court, and the indulgence shown to profligate and exacting ministers, soon disgusted the country, and new troubles began. Odo, Archbishop of Canterbury, conducted the party of Dunstan, who, though in exile at Ghent, was far from having abandoned the hope of ultimate triumph. The discontented clergy fomented the disaffection everywhere ripe; a rebellion broke out in Mercia and in the north, and Prince Edgar was proclaimed King, although only thirteen years of age.

The ill-fated Ethelgiva was alone in her palace in Wessex, her husband, being forced to absent himself in consequence of these accumulating troubles, considered her in perfect safety; but Bishop Odo's emissaries were on the watch, and a strong party of his troops surprised the place, when the Queen was seized upon, dragged forth, and a hideous

<sup>1</sup> The Charter, Cod. Dipl. No. 1201, which is in every respect an authentic document, mentions her as *Ælfgyfa*, the King's wife; and this in addition to herself was witnessed by her mother *Ædelgyfa*, by four bishops, and by three principal noblemen of the court. "If (says Mr. Kemble [*Kemble's Saxons in England*]) that charter be not genuine, there is not one genuine in the whole *Codex Diplomaticus*, and I cannot see the shadow of a reason to question it, as Lingard has done."



vengeance accomplished. Her beautiful face was seared by a red-hot iron, and she was forced on board a vessel, which carried her off a prisoner to Ireland.

Odo, on this, immediately repaired to Edwy, and endeavoured to represent to him the necessity of yielding, doubtless concealing from him the extent of the punishment he had inflicted on the unfortunate Ethelgiva, which, however, he was not slow to learn, when his agony and rage may be conceived.

Mercia and Northumberland now rose to place Edgar on the throne, and Edwy, whom these events had forced to fly about from place to place, entered, at length, into an arrangement with his young brother, that the river Thames should form a boundary to divide their respective principalities. No sooner was this effected than Edgar, upheld by the priesthood, annulled all the acts which had been passed against them by Edwy, recalled Dunstan from his exile, and reinstated the Queen-Dowager in her former rank and dignity. It must have been a great triumph to the enemies of the ill-fated Ethelgiva, to behold Dunstan, on the death of Coenwalch, Bishop of Worcester, chosen his successor in that see, and consecrated by Archbishop Odo. A still greater was afforded by the solemn sentence of divorce pronounced between the King and herself, by Odo, on the plea of their too near relationship.<sup>1</sup> The sentence was given by the Church A. D. 958.

The revengeful prelate had determined, at all costs, to uphold the canonical law of marriage, and his act proves how fully assured he was that violence or death alone could divide those who loved so tenderly as this ill-fated pair. Nor was this the last stroke of vindictive power exercised: Edwy himself underwent the sentence of excommunication,—a fact mentioned by Malmesbury alone, of all who have recorded the events of this most harshly-treated monarch's reign.

Some have supposed that it was the Queen's mother who was seared with the iron brand; but the object of the Archbishop was to destroy utterly that fatal beauty which had enslaved the King. The attempt was, however, fruitless: the effect of the searing-iron was in a few months entirely obliterated; and, restored to her former beauty, Ethelgiva, notwithstanding the sentence of perpetual exile issued against her, quitted Ireland, with the design of rejoining her beloved Edwy at Kingston. She was on her way thither when, at a short distance from Gloucester, she was intercepted by the spies of Odo, who once more obtained possession of their prisoner, retaining her until they could receive the orders of that prelate. Odo commanded that Ethelgiva should be tortured in the most horrible manner that could possibly be devised, and accordingly the frightful operation of hamstringing was put in force on her delicate limbs. This brutal sentence perpetrated, the young and beautiful Queen was left, without food or attendance, to linger on a bed of straw, till, at the end of a few days, death, more merciful than her heartless persecutors, released her from her sufferings.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Malmesbury.

Edwy, as unfortunate as his hapless consort, whose greatest crime seems to have been fidelity to the last, was not long destined to survive the loss of one so dearly loved. A series of afflictions pursued and overwhelmed him; rebellion—a younger brother preferred before him—his divorce and excommunication, together with the reversion of every decree made against his own enemies and those of Ethelgiva,—all combined, were too much for his mind to support. He sunk into a state of extreme melancholy, which, at the end of his stormy reign of four years, terminated his existence. The remains of the broken-hearted sovereign were interred at Winchester, the favourite city of the West-Saxon monarchs.

## ELFRIDA,

### QUEEN OF EDGAR "THE PEACEABLE."

Edgar's volatile Character—Wulfreda, the nun—Ethelfleda the Fair, mother of Edward—Her death, and Elfrida's beauty—Ethelwold's mission—His deception, and marriage to Elfrida—Misrepresentation to the king—Ethelwold's son—Hunting—The tribute of wolves' heads—The concealed beauty—Ethelwold's confession to his wife—Her resolve—Her conquest—The murder in the forest—Marriage of Edgar and Elfrida—St. Dunstan—Elfrida's power—Contentions—Ventriloquism—Ely—Ordwulf, the giant—Dissolute clergy—Coronation at Bath—King Edgar's death—Edward the Martyr—His cruel murder—Ethelred's tears: the whipping with wax candles—Pledging—Miracles—Penitence of the Queen postponed—Saxon verses—Dunstan's anathema—Murder of Brithnoth, Abbot of Ely—Ethelred asserts his will—Elfrida returns to Warewell—Her religious edifices—Wulfreda ejected from Barking—Death of Elfrida—Royal grant to the convent.

THE severity of St. Dunstan, which had been so inveterate towards the unfortunate Edwy, relaxed singularly in regard to his successor, Edgar, whose habits and propensities do not appear to have differed much from those of the King, his brother, whom he superseded. But he was so young that time was before the ambitious churchman to mould him to his wishes, and to secure all that he desired for the good of the Church, and for the well-governing of the country; for Dunstan was a man of too intelligent a mind to sacrifice one to the other.

Many romantic tales are related in ballads and Saxon poems, of the volatile affections of the young King. He is accused of having carried off a nun, or at least a novice, from the Abbey of Wilton, where she was residing, and forcibly detaining her. This fair one is called Wulfreda,<sup>1</sup> and she became the mother of a daughter, who afterwards dedicated herself to a religious life; she having herself retired to the Monastery of Barking, founded by Edgar, in expiation of his act.

The first wife of Edgar is called Ethelfleda the Fair, or the White; and sometimes also, for some unexplained reason, *the Duck*;<sup>2</sup> she was the mother of Prince Edward, who succeeded Edgar on the throne; but she died early, and it was soon afterwards that Elfrida became his wife.

The extraordinary beauty of the only daughter and heiress of the aged Ordgar, Ealdorman of Devonshire, made her hand the prize coveted by many a youthful Saxon noble; and such lively pictures of the young lady's beauty had reached the court of Edgar, that the heart of that monarch, apparently extremely susceptible, was set on fire by the reports.

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury, Brompton, Osbern.

<sup>2</sup> Lappenberg.  
(374)

He instantly formed the design of securing to himself so great a treasure, and directed Ethelwold, his minister and friend, who was at most times his confidant and adviser, a noble whom "he much loved and trusted," to repair to the residence of Elfrida's father, and ascertain whether her beauty was indeed such as had been reported. The secret object of this mission was revealed to the courtier in these words: "Go to the noble Baron Ordgar of Devonshire, see if his daughter be as fair as men spoken of; and if it be so, I will have her unto my wife."

Ethelwold obeyed;—he discovered that report had not exaggerated, but rather fallen short of the truth in its picture of the charming Elfrida, and so much was he enraptured with the young lady on their first interview, that, wholly forgetting his object in seeing her had been to advance the suit of another, and that other his sovereign, he earnestly desired to obtain the lovely heiress for himself. He accordingly, without betraying the real object of his visit, proposed to her father that a union should take place between himself and the lady; and Ordgar, who was not ignorant that the noble Ethelwold, besides being a fair young knight, worthy, and, moreover, "well with the King," was a man certain of his fortunes, being the favorite of his royal master, considered the proposal so advantageous, that he accorded his consent to the match, provided also that the King himself was agreeable to it,<sup>1</sup> a point which involved some difficulty to the lover of Elfrida.

Edgar had, in earliest infancy, been placed by his father, King Edmund, under the care of Alfwenna, a noble lady,<sup>2</sup> the mother of Ethelwold, who, in consequence, had, with three younger brothers, been the playmates in childhood, and trusty friends and companions in riper years, of their future sovereign: indeed, it was to the powerful influence of Athelstan, the husband of Alfwenna, an East Anglian nobleman, whose royal descent and extensive authority had procured for him the denomination of "Half-King," that Edgar was mainly indebted for his elevation to the throne of Northumberland and Mercia during his brother Edwy's lifetime, and subsequently, for the kingdom of all England. To testify his gratitude, Edgar erected East Anglia into an Earldom, Athelstan being the first who enjoyed the title and authority of Earl over that district, an honour afterwards enjoyed by Ethelwold at his death.<sup>3</sup>

Knowing how high the suitor for his daughter's hand stood with the King, the Ealdorman felt no doubts, when the Earl engaged to obtain the desired consent to his proposed nuptials with Elfrida: it was a task which required, under his circumstances, very nice management, yet he succeeded to his utmost desire; for, on his return to court, he so much undervalued the charms of Elfrida, as completely to put an end to the King's anxiety about her: he represented her as "handsome enough in the face, but a deformed cripple in body." Edgar at once, on this, ex-

<sup>1</sup> Caxton's Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard; Parkins's Norwich. The name Alf-wenna, signifying "Half-Queen," implies very high rank and power in its possessor.

<sup>3</sup> Athelstan assumed the religious habit of a monk at Glastonbury prior to his decease; his wife, Edgar's foster-mother, was buried in Charteris Nunnery, in Cambridgeshire, an establishment of her own foundation.



pressed his indifference to the match without reserve; whereupon Ethelwold rejoined:—"Sir, she is her father's heir, and I am not rich of lands; and if you would consent, and grant that I might have her, then should I be rich enough." "In God's name," quoth the King, "I consent thereto." Then Ethelwold thanked the King, and returned into Devonshire, and after having "spoused the damsell," he dwelt in that country.<sup>1</sup>

Not long after Elfrida's marriage, her husband, in an evil hour, informed her of all that he had done to deceive King Edgar, who had desired to marry her, and to obtain her for his own wife, confiding in her professed affection, that she would hear the tale with pleasure; but as soon as she was made acquainted with these particulars, "she loved him no more, from that time forwards, as she had done before."<sup>2</sup> In due time she presented Ethelwold with a son, who repaired to court, and solicited Edgar to become sponsor for the infant, which was granted, and the child was named Edgar. Ethelwold, after this condescension on the part of the King, felt more secure than ever from suspicion. The English courtiers had, however, viewed with envy and dissatisfaction the Earl's rich advancement by his marriage; and it was whispered at court, that whatever pecuniary advantages Ethelwold had obtained, his gain was at least an hundred-fold greater in having espoused "the fairest woman that ever was seen."<sup>3</sup> Thus, Edgar too soon became acquainted with the truth, and felt a redoubled curiosity to behold the woman whose beauty, celebrated before, had become so much more renowned as Earl Ethelwold's wife.

Dissembling the resentment which agitated his bosom, Edgar, who was accustomed to devote much of his time to the chase, devised a hunting-party,<sup>4</sup> for which the real object was an excuse to visit Devonshire, of which Elfrida's father was Earl, and in which county Ethelwold had hitherto secluded his wife in a state of the strictest privacy, with the hope of guarding her beauty from the monarch's eye. The Earl himself formed one of the party on this momentous occasion. As they approached the house in which Elfrida dwelt, the King informed Ethelwold of his intention to behold the lady whose charms he had heard so highly extolled. The alarmed noble vainly endeavoured to dissuade the King from his purpose; but, unable to succeed, as a last resource hastened forward to apprise Elfrida of the dreaded honour. Some say that the terror felt by Ethelwold at this hour of expected discovery, first wrung from his

<sup>1</sup> Caxton, William of Malmesbury.

<sup>2</sup> Caxton.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Edgar was remarkably fond of the chase; so much so that he would frequently hunt on a Sunday. Dunstan reproved him for this, and he owned and amended his error. In his reign it was a too common habit with the clergy to neglect their duties, and mix with the laity in the pleasures of gaming, hunting, dancing, and singing, besides which they lived openly with their concubines or wives. As might be expected, the habits in such a court were not very select. Edgar himself was most devoted to the hunting of the wolf, and he rendered an essential benefit to the country by imposing on Judwal, King of Wales, an annual payment of 300 wolves' heads; in the fourth year this payment ceased, for the want of wolves. It was usual to pay this Welsh tribute at Winchester, whence Wolvesey Castle has derived its name.—Hume, Malmesbury.

lips the confession to his wife of the artifice his affection had led him to employ, for the sake of obtaining her hand, while he earnestly besought that she would array herself as unbecomingly as possible, to conceal her beauty from Edgar's eye.

The Earl had misjudged his wife's character, in making this appeal to her good feelings. Hers was not a nature to forgive the man who had robbed her of a crown, and bestowed on her merely the coronet of an earl's wife. The knowledge of the King's approaching visit awakened all her ambition, and she resolved not to let the opportunity escape of securing his attention. She had secretly pined in the retirement to which Ethelwold's prudence had consigned her. She had sighed, but hitherto in vain, to exhibit her beauty and wealth, in all their pomp, at the splendid court of the monarch, who was a known admirer of female loveliness. The moment so auspicious was at hand, and if lost might never be renewed. Her heart full of contempt, amounting almost to hatred, for the man who knelt to sue her to adopt the course he desired, she promised to comply with his wish, but her promise was merely a deception to put her husband off his guard. When Edgar arrived, attended by his agitated friend, Elfrida, to his distraction, appeared before her sovereign in a dress resembling that of a bride. The vesture was as rich and costly as she could render it; her golden hair was finely combed, and part of it hanging down in luxuriant curls; her head was crowned with jewels, and a chain of diamonds about her neck gave splendour to her unparalleled beauty.<sup>1</sup> The enraptured monarch had no sooner beheld the lovely apparition, than he resolved, cost what it might, to obtain so rich a treasure. For the time, however, he dissembled his anger against Ethelwold, and seeming to think lightly of her beauty, bade her farewell with apparent indifference. His first step was to order a place of entertainment to be prepared for Elfrida and her husband, in return for their hospitality, near the wood in which they were to hunt, and to which he might repair when his sports were over.

On his return to the spot prepared for his accommodation, King Edgar beheld Elfrida holding in her arms her infant son, his namesake and godson, whom Ethelwold presented to him. On this the sovereign embraced and kissed Elfrida the mother, and became from that moment so much distracted with love, that he could obtain little rest, ever meditating how to obtain her. His schemes were at last determined, and the King acted accordingly. Eight days after, a parliament was called at Salisbury, at which all the magistrates of the land were present. Then Edgar subjected to their consideration his project for the safe custody of Northumberland from the incursions of the Danes; and it was settled that Ethelwold should be appointed governor of York and the adjacent country. This was a deeply planned scheme, apparently intended to honour the Earl to whom he had so recently made a visit, but who was not intended to reap the fruits of the promotion.<sup>2</sup> The Earl was found shortly after murdered, in the Forest of Wherwell, in Hampshire, where it was supposed he had been attacked by robbers when passing through its gloomy

<sup>1</sup> Heywood's History of Women.  
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<sup>2</sup> Dugdale.

shades; but there is no doubt that they were armed men instructed by King Edgar to lie in wait for his former favourite, who, by his orders, barbarously murdered him. Another account given is, that the King's own hand dealt the fatal stroke; that Ethelwold, in passing through the forest, encountered, either by chance or design, his formerly attached but now revengeful master; that the King and Earl conversed for some time with apparent cordiality, till, on arriving at the thickest part of the wood, Edgar suddenly drew his dagger and stabbed the Earl to the heart.<sup>1</sup>

While some accounts fix the Forest of Wherwell as the scene of the gloomy tragedy, others point out Harewood Forest, in the north of England, as memorable for the murder of the unfortunate Earl, which indeed is noted by the traditions of the neighborhood. Mason the poet thus describes the spot:—

“A darkling dell, which opens in a lawn,  
Thick set with elms around,”—

and in his well-known play, has represented the Countess Elfrida as an angel of light and goodness, full of truth and constancy. Warner, who visited the scene of the Earl's murder, describes it in his work as being half a mile beyond the ancient Castle and Forest of Harewood.

There is an ancient ballad or “Song of King Edgar, showing how he was deceived of his love,” which contains these lines:—

“Thus he that did the king deceive,  
Did by desert his death receive.”

No sooner was the news of the murder brought to court, than Edgar “sent for the widow of the glorious Ethelwold, Lord of the East Angles,<sup>2</sup> to come to London, and straightway made her his Queen;<sup>3</sup> and on the same day that the nuptials were solemnized, the King and Queen Elfrida appeared together in public, both of them wearing crowns on their heads; by which act the people plainly perceived who was the author of the Earl's death, and consequently made no exertions for the discovery of the murderer.”<sup>4</sup>

“But,” say the chroniclers, “on the morrow morning after their marriage and public appearance with their crowns, Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, came into the King's lodging-chamber, and boldly asked him ‘who that was that he had with him?’ and it being answered ‘the Queen,’ the good Archbishop plainly replied, ‘that it was against the laws of God and holy Church, to be united to one whose son he had been godfather to, in respect of their spiritual kindred; after which time,’ continues the historian, “Elfrida never loved St. Dunstan; yet he ceased not to admonish the King of that fault, though to little purpose.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is added, that a natural son of Ethelwold passed closely at the time, when the King asked “How it pleased him?” To which the youth servilely replied, “Very well! if it so please your grace, for whatsoever pleaseth you, ought not to displease me!” The answer saved his life; and Edgar afterwards tried to extenuate his murder of the father by lavishing favours on his son.

<sup>2</sup> Flor. Wigorn.

<sup>3</sup> Parkins's Hist. of Norwich.

<sup>4</sup> Gaillard's Rivalité.

<sup>5</sup> Malmesbury. Dugdale.



At this very time, when the marriage festivities were going on, began a series of misfortunes to the country in the shape of pestilence and conflagrations. London was devastated by the latter scourge, and the Cathedral of St. Paul was reduced to ashes. Of course the monks did not fail to attribute these events to the indignation of Heaven. Nevertheless, population increased; Edgar remained popular with his subjects, for his public acts were all deserving of praise, and showed both energy and wisdom. He has been blamed for the favour he showed to the Danish settlers, but his expeditions against the Welsh and other disaffected nations, were satisfactory, and brought him both fame and profit.

The date of Elfrida's marriage is fixed by the Saxon Chronicle in 965, an obvious mistake, as her name appears appended to a charter in the year 964; it is therefore very likely that Roger of Wendover is correct in assigning the nuptials to the year 963.

The solemn coronation of Elfrida soon followed her marriage, notwithstanding the reproaches of Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury. It is not, however, certain that Edgar was crowned with her then, but at a later period she shared with him that solemn pageant of royalty. Thus having reached the height of her ambition, Elfrida endeavoured to extinguish her remorse, and atone for her crimes, by erecting a monastery on the spot where Ethelwold had been slain. Aylwin, his brother, had succeeded to the Earldom of East Anglia; he was founder of the Abbeys of Ramsey and Huntingdon, where his statue may yet be seen.<sup>1</sup> The last Earl of East Anglia was Harold, the son of Godwin, and it is somewhat remarkable that his wife was not only, by her marriage to him, Countess of East Anglia, but exchanged that title, like Elfrida for the more exalted one of Queen of England.

Notwithstanding her ambition, Elfrida could hardly expect to receive higher honours than those accorded to the former consort of Edgar, Ethelfleda the Fair, who, in some records of Edgar's reign, is styled only "the King's wife," but never the *Queen*.<sup>2</sup>

Yet while the other consorts of those sovereigns of the heptarchy who had maintained their independence after Edgar, were permitted to enjoy that title which Elfrida had bought at so high a price, it was not in her nature to be content with the honours due to the husband only, and reflected from him. Elfrida had worn the crown on her wedding-day, and thus attired, sat like Judith in her chair of state by the side of Edgar; and though we find her afterwards styled frequently "the King's wife," she had also the enviable title of *Regina* accorded to her. A charter granted by Edgar to the Church of Worcester, A.D. 964, the year after his marriage, was signed by Elfrida thus: "Ego Elfired *Regina* consensi et signo crucis confirmavi;" while another to the Church at Ely, was also attested by her as "*Regina*."<sup>3</sup>

In King Edgar's Charter of Privilege to Hyde Abbey, by Winchester, which is yet extant, in a hand of that age, in letters of gold, may also be found the signature of Queen Elfrida. First appear the manors and

<sup>1</sup> Parkins.

<sup>2</sup> Carter and Dugdale. Selden's Titles of Honour

<sup>3</sup> Cott. Lib.



donations of Edgar, Dunstan, Edmund, and Edward; then the subscription of the Queen, who takes precedence of Edgifa, the King's grandmother, that venerable friend and patron of the pious and good during several reigns, the aged relict of King Edward the Elder.

"I, Alfdrid, the lawful wife of the aforesaid King, by my bequest establishing monks in the same place, with the King's permission, have made the mark of the cross." Then follows:—

"I, Eadgifa, grandmother of the aforesaid King, have confirmed this excellent work by the sign of the cross."

The fact of the words "with the King's permission" being inserted, shows that it was not a common custom for the King's wife to attest these charters. In this last document the name of Regina is omitted.

After the second innovation of the law for Elfrida, it ceased to be regarded in Wessex, and from that time forward we find the Saxon Queens of England were, as a matter of right, crowned, anointed, and seats of state provided for them by the side of their husbands on the most public occasions, besides which they bore the title of "Regina" or "Queen."

The Book of Grants, presented by Edgar himself to the Cathedral of Winchester, bearing the date A. D. 966, and written entirely in letters of gold, in the old Saxon character, contains a curious and ancient illumination. The book is in the Cottonian Library, marked "Vespasianus A. VIII.," and an engraving from it may be seen in Strutt's *Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities*, where the following description is given:—

"Edgar is here delineated as piously adoring our Blessed Saviour, who appears above seated on a globe, to show his empire, and supported by four angels, emblems of the four gospels; under his feet are two folding-doors, intended, perhaps, to represent the entrance into the bottomless pit, which is so placed to convey the idea of his triumph over Death and Hell; in his left hand he holds the book of judgment, which is to be opened in the last day."

Strutt supposes the figures on the right and left of the King to be Cuthbert, the Saint of Durham, and Etheldreda, Abbess of Ely. On the opposite page is a Saxon inscription in capital letters of gold, thus translated into modern English:—

"Thus sits that God alone who made the heavens  
Whilst humbly Edgar the king pays his adoration."

To quote further from Strutt, "as there has been extraordinary pains taken in the writing and ornaments of this book, and as it was written (which appears by the date) at the very time of Edgar, it is more than barely probable that this is not only an exact delineation of the habit of that monarch, but also (to the best of the illuminator's power) a true portrait of him." The following is the description of the colours of the original:—"The garment of our Saviour is a dark blue, and the lighter robe is gold; so also is the oval he sits in, the book he holds, and the doors under his feet. The angels are dressed in white, and the shadowed part is gold, as well on the habit as on the wings. The king's cloak is a dark blue, edged with gold, his coat a deepish crimson, and his hose a dark brown; his book and crown are gold. The saints, on each side of

him, are in blue, and the lighter-coloured part of their garments is gold, as well as the ornaments they hold, and the glory over their heads."

Edgar was one of the greatest friends the Church ever had in this country. He is said to have built forty monasteries, to have completed Glastonbury, which his father had founded, and to have adorned the religious edifices of Abingdon, Thorney, Burgh, and Ramsey, besides founding a building for nuns in Winchester.

Elfrida was present, A. D. 969, at a witenagemote of considerable importance, held at Winchester in the royal palace. In that year Edgar gave instructions to St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sts. Oswald and Ethelwold, the Bishops of Worcester and Winchester, to expel all the clerks from the larger monasteries of Mercia, and replace them with monks. This expulsion was in consequence of the dissolute life they led. The clerks who were expelled, desired to prefer a complaint against the severity of Dunstan, in the King's own presence; and they were met by the Archbishop in the witan at Winchester, the King, Queen, nobles, and clergy being assembled on the occasion. After Dunstan had uttered his defence, the clerks prayed to be restored, and those who held possession of their offices removed. Dunstan spoke not, but hung down his head as if in reverie;<sup>1</sup> but it is said that at this moment a figure of our Lord, affixed to the standard of the cross, appeared in an elevated position in the palace, and a voice was heard saying, "Let it not be done — let it not be done; well have ye judged, ill would ye change." The King and all present, at first astonished and terrified to death almost by this extraordinary appearance, filled the air with their shouts, and assented to the sacred decision.

Ethelwold, one of the three prelates appointed to survey the monasteries, was a pupil of Dunstan, and some of the expelled monks had tried to deprive him of life by poison. It was Ethelwold, who, by Edgar's order, commenced the restoration of the monasteries which had either fallen into decay or been ruined by the Danes.<sup>2</sup> Ely was the first monastery repaired; it had been destroyed by the Danes, A. D. 970, and instead of filling it with nuns as before, Ethelwold placed in it a company of monks, under Brithnoth, one of his own society or establishment, whom he constituted abbot. Brithnoth governed Ely in that capacity eleven years, at the end of which his history becomes identified with that of Queen Elfrida, as will be seen in the course of this memoir. The restoration of Medehamstede, after it had laid waste for nearly a hundred years, was commenced in the same year as that of Ely by Ethelwold, and

<sup>1</sup> It appears evident that this scene was got up by Dunstan, whose knowledge of mechanics, ventriloquism, optics, &c., enabled him easily to impose on the uninformed personages with whom he had to do. The charge of magic has always been made against the learned in the sciences in all unenlightened times, and it was a great temptation to one who had a great end to gain, the feeling that he could so well deceive, without a chance of detection.

<sup>2</sup> Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, in a great famine, sold all the sacred vessels of his church to relieve the poor, saying, "That there was no reason why the senseless temples of God should abound in riches, and lively temples of the Holy Ghost should want them."—Howel, *Med. Hist. Ang.*

when completed it received the name of Peterborough, which has descended to modern times.<sup>1</sup> Leland relates that Edgar assisted Ethelwold in rebuilding Medehamstede, by the persuasion, some say, of his first wife, Ethelfleda the White; but the date of the restoration of this abbey proves that it was Elfrida, and not Ethelfleda, by whose counsel he acted. When St. Paul's, in London, was endowed by Edgar with twenty-five mansions and a considerable sum in money, Ethelfleda is said to have added her own donation of two lordships, which royal gifts were afterwards confirmed by Ethelred and Canute. These, and the donation of the island of Portsea, to the New Minster, at Winchester, have been attributed to Ethelfleda, but appear much more like the acts of Elfrida, who was desirous of purchasing peace with the Church which she had offended. That Elfrida, as well as Edgar, took an active part in the restoration of clerical institutions is evident. In the Cottonian Library is extant a reformation of the monastic life of both sexes, written in King Edgar's time, wherein he takes care of the monks, and his wife Elfrida of the nuns.

Elfede<sup>2</sup> "Candida" (the White), Edgar's first wife, had left him two children, Edward, afterwards surnamed the Martyr, and a daughter called Editha, who entered into the seclusion of a conventual life.<sup>3</sup>

The children of Edgar by Elfrida were two sons, of whom the eldest, Edmund Atheling, died in his father's lifetime, A. D. 971, and was interred with princely honours in the Monastery of Rumsey, Hampshire."<sup>4</sup> The youngest of the royal children bore the name of Ethelred, to which was afterwards added the surname of "the Unready," and with his mother's beauty, he inherited some, at least, of her bad qualities.

Not long after the death of her son Edmund, Elfrida lost her father, Earl Ordgar, who was interred at Exeter. In the year of his decease, A. D. 971, this nobleman<sup>5</sup> had commenced an abbey at Tavistock, in Devonshire, which he filled with monks. The edifice itself was on a very grand scale, and not completed till 981; it was finished by Ordulf, the Queen's brother, a person described as of gigantic size and stature, whose figure, and also some of his bones, were exhibited there; but the Danes destroyed the building, about ten years after its completion. Malmesbury records, amongst other instances of the personal strength of Ordulf, that when the drowsy warder of Exeter delayed on one occasion to open the gates, he burst them open, demolishing also the stone jambs on which they hung.

Elfrida seems to have accompanied her husband on most occasions of importance, and probably the King's leisure intervals were passed in her society, though his infidelities are said to have been great. We are told that the Saxon princes had a palace situate to the north of St. Albans,

<sup>1</sup> Chron. Peterburgens; Ingulphus; Vit. S. Ethelwold.

<sup>2</sup> The name is written at times, Egelfleda and Eneda; also Ethelfleda and Elfleda.

<sup>3</sup> Gaillard's Rivalité, &c.

<sup>4</sup> Ramsey and Rumsey were quite different places, though each was distinguished by a convent; that of Ramsey was in Huntingdonshire, and built by Elfrida's brother.

<sup>5</sup> Turner, Roger of Wendover.



the site of which is now occupied by King's Bury, to which they were wont to resort at times for their favourite amusement of fishing. "At this royal abode there was a great fishpool, of about twenty acres, which, by the festivities displayed on it, was a great inconvenience to the neighbouring Abbey, till Abbot Ailric procured it, in exchange for a *cup of rich workmanship*, of King Edgar. He had afterwards the embankment cut away, and the waters dispersed; but the situation is still pointed out by Fish Pool Street, in the lower part of St. Albans." The palace itself was not finally demolished till the reign of King Stephen.<sup>1</sup>

The dissolute lives of the clergy during this reign have been already noticed, and, indeed, a great laxity of morals appears to have prevailed among all classes. At this time there were so many Danes in the country, who gave themselves up to drinking and idolatry to such an excess, that they were hardly governable. To repress the vice of drunkenness, the Winchester measure was instituted. Edgar ordained a size, by certain pins in the pot, with a penalty to any that presumed to drink deeper than the mark. Gold and silver nails were also ordered by Dunstan for this same purpose, and were put into the drinking-vessels to prevent inebriety and quarrels. These pins, nails, or pegs, were fastened in the pots, whence the phrase "to drink to the pin," a feat only acquired by long practice.<sup>2</sup>

Edgar also commanded a new coinage, the old having been so reduced, by the fraud of cheating clippers, that scarcely any piece was found to be of worth, when its value was tested in the scales.<sup>3</sup>

There is no doubt that London and Winchester were frequently chosen residences of Edgar and Elfrida, and most probably Worcester, where their son Ethelred II. afterwards erected a tower, called "King Edgar's Tower," because the statues of that King and his two Queens, Elfleda and Elfrida, are placed on its eastern front.<sup>4</sup>

In 972 Edgar and Elfrida were solemnly crowned at St. Peter's, Bath, the ceremony being performed by Dunstan, on the 11th of May, the feast of Pentecost. St. Oswald assisted in the ceremonies of consecrating and anointing Edgar and his Queen. For seven years previously Edgar had laid aside his crown, a penance imposed by Dunstan, for his crime in carrying off the nun Wulfreda of Wilton; he now resumed the insignia of royalty in public, and surrounded by his peers, to whom, on this occasion, he presented the customary gifts. The royal robes, worn by Edgar

<sup>1</sup> Britton and Brayley.

<sup>2</sup> The custom of drinking to the pin is thought to have been introduced by the Danes themselves, who fixed a pin inside of their wassail-bowl.—Hardy's Notes on William of Malmesbury.

<sup>3</sup> That the byzant or besant, an ancient Greek coin of gold, which was named from ancient Byzantium, and issued by the Greek emperors, was used in England, is proved by the fact that St. Dunstan purchased of King Edgar the estate of Hindon, in Middlesex, for 200 byzants. The coin was generally current in England before the Norman Conquest, and has been introduced in armorial bearings. The value of one byzant, according to Dr. Henry, was nine shillings and fourpence.—Notes to Le Grand's Fabliaux.

<sup>4</sup> Green's History of Worcester.



at his coronation, are described as of immense value, on which account the King afterwards bestowed them on Glastonbury, as a decoration for the altar.

“Much bliss there was, by all enjoyed,  
On the happy day named Pentecost;  
Crowds of priests, and throngs of monks,  
In council sage were gathered there.”<sup>1</sup>

Not long after this grand event, Edgar, who seems to have been to the full as fond of pomp and parade as his consort Elfrida, summoned his subreguli at Chester.<sup>2</sup> Kenneth, King of Scots, was among the first to do him homage, and was followed by his nephew, Malcolm of Cumbria, and Maccus, King of Mona and the Isles, by the Princes of Galloway, and the Cymric tribes.<sup>3</sup> During this meeting at Chester, Edgar one day purposed to go by water to the Abbey of St. John the Baptist, and obliged eight of these tributary princes to row him in a barge upon the Dee, Kenneth MacAlpine being one of the number. This king had received Lothian from Edgar, on condition that he should annually attend Edgar's principal feasts, and do him homage for that district. The English king gave him several houses for his entertainment during his journey, and made him many handsome presents, such as one hundred ounces of pure gold, many silken ornaments, and rings with precious stones.

Amid all the honours accorded to royalty, the highest in such a gay and glorious court, Elfrida must have had her heart's utmost desires fulfilled; but her triumph was not destined to last; and could she have foreseen how little real happiness was to be gained by her crime, even her first steps in that career had perhaps been stayed. Her successes and glories were terminated, in the twelfth year of their marriage, by the King's death, who was then only in the thirty-second year of his age, though the sixteenth of his reign. He died July 8th, 975, and was interred at Glastonbury, with every regal honour. The tomb was, at a later period, 1052, opened<sup>4</sup> by Abbot Ailward, when the King's remains were re-interred within a large shrine covered with gold and silver, and inlaid with beautifully moulded images in ivory, which had been Edgar's own present to the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Edgar was, in person, small and thin, [a picture of him may be seen in *Wynkyn de Worde*,] which caused Kenneth to remark with surprise that so many provinces should yield obedience to a man so insignificant. The speech reached the ears of Edgar, who led his guest apart into a wood, and producing two swords, bade him choose one of them. “Our arms,” said the king, “shall decide which ought to obey the other; for it will be base to have asserted that at a feast, which you cannot support with your sword.” Kenneth, in much confusion, remembered his hasty observation, and “apologised for it as a joke.”—Turner.

<sup>3</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>4</sup> The opening of the tomb is said to have been attended with several miracles. Not only was the royal corpse fresh and incorrupt, but the abbot, seeing it was too large for the receptacle prepared for it, having profanely hacked it with a steel instrument in his hand, to his own horror, and that of the spectators, torrents of blood burst forth from the wound. The abbot afterwards became insane, and died a violent death!—Saxon Chronicle.

Immediately the King's death became known, two mighty factions arose, which threatened to lead to a civil war. The King's will had declared that the crown should devolve on Edward, the son of his first wife, an amiable Prince, then in the thirteenth year of his age; but the ambitious Elfrida desired to secure the throne to her son Ethelred, then but a child of about seven, and objected to Edward's claim, that his mother either had not been lawfully married to Edgar, or that the young prince was born before their coronation, and that he was illegitimate, besides which the Queen alleged he was of a harsh and cruel disposition.<sup>1</sup> As Elfrida had always possessed great influence with the late King, she had acquired many friends, who now became partizans in favour of Ethelred's succession;<sup>2</sup> but many of the nobles who were acquainted with her imperious temper, dreaded the consequences of her being placed as Regent at the head of the State, which must have been the case if Ethelred was elected king, and of this number was the Queen's old enemy, Dunstan, still the most powerful person in the kingdom, to whom even monarchs had been forced to submit. It was this prelate who stepped forward in the emergency, to carry into effect the claims of Edward, knowing that he was supported by the wishes of the people generally, and by Oswald and other bishops and nobles, who desired the late King's will to be respected. Dunstan, indeed, was the last person in the world who was willing to suffer such a diminution of his own power as would have been the result of Ethelred's advancement, when his mother Elfrida was directly his opponent; he accordingly convened an assembly of nobles at Kingston, for the purpose of crowning and anointing Edward. The faction of Elfrida, among whom was Alfer, Duke of Mercia, formally declared against the ceremony taking place; the Queen herself, who was present, objected on account of the Prince's illegitimacy, which rendered her son the legal heir.<sup>3</sup> At this crisis Dunstan appeared, bearing in his hands the banner of the crucifix, accompanied by young Edward, whom he presented to the lords as their rightful monarch, declaring that he would himself be responsible for their Prince's conduct, whom he would regulate as his father's tutor and prime-minister. This promise of Dunstan united the wavering minds of the assembled lords, and Edward was received with universal joy.<sup>4</sup> Taking the youth by the hand, Dunstan marched directly to the church, accompanied by the other bishops, and followed by a great crowd of people, where he anointed him King, in spite of the opposition of Elfrida and her party, who were overwhelmed with grief at the priest's triumph.<sup>5</sup>

This public acknowledgment of Edward by Dunstan proves the validity of his mother's marriage, and the base artifice Elfrida had employed against him. Had he really been illegitimate, as an author observes who was of that opinion himself,<sup>6</sup> Elfrida might justly be excused for desiring the true heir to become king.

<sup>1</sup> Brit. Sancta, Lingard.<sup>2</sup> Hume.<sup>3</sup> Brit. Sancta, Osborn, and Capgrave.<sup>4</sup> Holinshed.<sup>5</sup> Henry.<sup>6</sup> Holinshed says, Edward was born of a nun named Elfeda, and not of Edgar's Queen.

Even after the coronation was over, the Queen still continued to strive by all possible means to get Ethelred's claim acknowledged, and so far inveigled Edward by her flattery, that he suffered her to order all the affairs of the kingdom, retaining for himself merely the title of King. At the same time he was, if possible, still more devoted to St. Dunstan and his followers than his father had been, so that the nation had every hope the reign would be prosperous and happy. All these expectations were, however, frustrated by the Queen's ambition, who could not rest tranquil. She opposed Dunstan in all ways, and her friends, the opponents of the Church in general, destroyed the monasteries which Edgar had built. It will be remembered that the enemies of Dunstan and Ethelwold, among the clergy, had been ejected, on account of dissolute conduct, from their offices. Elfrida, to strengthen the party of Ethelred, declared herself openly their patroness, the highest affront which could have been offered to Dunstan; besides which she tried to bias the minds of the great in favour of her son. Mercia and Earl Alfer sided with her and with those who protected the disgraced clergy. Essex and East Anglia, with their Earls, sided with the King and Dunstan, to whose will he was subject, and who therefore was possessed of great power, yet had to cope with one who was as ambitious as himself, and perhaps even more unprincipled as to the means of gratifying the passion. There was every prospect of a civil war, when Elfrida perceived another method of attaining her object; she joined in a conspiracy to assassinate Edward, and accident shortly after furnished her with an opportunity of effecting her purpose.<sup>1</sup>

The young King had shown, from the first, every mark of respectful attention to Elfrida, to whom he had presented the county of Dorset as a dowry, affixing to it a royal dignity.<sup>2</sup>

The monarch was returning from a hunting excursion in Dorsetshire, near Wareham, not far from which stood Corfe Castle, the residence of his mother-in-law and of her son Ethelred. While his companions were earnestly pursuing the game, Edward was left alone, and perceiving the walls of the castle in the distance, he hastened thither to pay his respects with his accustomed courtesy to his mother-in-law, who, on perceiving him, with feigned affability welcomed, and invited him to alight and refresh himself. This, however, Edward declined, but requested a cup of wine to be brought him, and at the same time inquired for his brother. Whether Elfrida had premeditated this treachery towards her son-in-law, or whether the favourable opportunity suggested this act of cruelty, remains uncertain; she, however, commissioned one of her creatures<sup>3</sup> to stab the King in the back, while in the act of drinking. Edward, finding himself wounded, spurred his horse to rejoin his friends, but from loss of blood fell from his seat, and one of his feet being caught in the stirrup, he was dragged for some time by the affrighted animal, who being at length arrested near a house on the road side, the mangled corpse was found there by some domestics of the Queen, who had tracked him thither by the blood, and by commands previously received from Elfrida, they

<sup>1</sup> Gaillard's *Rivalité*, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Turner.

Knyghton and Burke say the Queen herself did the deed.



threw the body into a well.<sup>1</sup> As Roger of Wendover relates, "The wicked woman Alfdrihta, and her son Ethelred, ordered the corpse of the king and martyr, St. Edward, to be ignominiously buried at Wareham, in the midst of public rejoicing and festivity, as if they had buried his memory and his body together; for now that he was dead, they grudged him ecclesiastical sepulture, as when he was alive they robbed him of royal honour." The young Ethelred, however, deserved not the blame even of a participation in this cruel transaction; for he had tenderly loved the King his brother, and wept bitterly on hearing the news of his death. Elfrida, unable to pacify him, was so much offended, that it is added, "having no rod at hand, in the violent paroxysm of her anger, she seized some tapers that stood before her, and beat the boy so severely that she had almost killed him, too, upon the spot. So terrified was the child that he never after could endure to have any of those sort of candles lighted before him."<sup>2</sup> The tapers of the middle ages were from *five to seven pounds weight*, and being placed in candlesticks of silver, formed an ornament for the bedchamber of ladies. King Alfred, it is well known, caused his candles to be adapted to the measurement of time. Elfrida's correction was, therefore, by no means of a gentle kind.

A MS. Psalter, preserved in the Royal Library at the British Museum, having been formerly presented to Queen Mary in 1553, by Baldwin Smith, a citizen of London, contains an engraving which represents Edward hunting, and his visit to Corfe Castle. The same attendant who offers the King a cup of drink, is seen there stabbing him with a dagger. One of our modern customs, that of pledging each other at table, arose from the circumstances attending the death of Edward. The old Saxon mode of pledging, when two persons drank together, was as follows:—"The person who was going to drink, asked any one of the company that sat next him, whether he would pledge him. On which, he answering that he would, held up his sword or knife to guard him whilst he drank; for while a man is drinking he necessarily is in an unguarded posture, exposed to the traitorous stroke of some hidden or secret enemy; this practice originated from the treacherous conduct of Elfrida to her son-in-law."<sup>3</sup>

The friends of the deceased King soon discovered the remains of their murdered sovereign, and having burnt the body, interred the ashes at Wareham.<sup>4</sup> But the deed was not destined to be thus passed over, for "the innocent victim" of Elfrida "was ennobled with the grace of miracles."<sup>5</sup> The King's body, on the night of the murder,<sup>6</sup> had been carried into a cottage where a poor woman dwelt, who was maintained by the charity of Elfrida: she was blind, but is said to have been restored suddenly to sight. This miraculous circumstance, being reported next morn-

<sup>1</sup> Gaillard's *Rivalité*, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Strutt.

<sup>4</sup> Gaillard, &c.

<sup>5</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>6</sup> In 1245, Pope Innocent IV. ordained that the day of Edward's murder should be kept as a festival: the exact date of the event was March 18th, 979 (*Brit. Sancta*). He had reigned three years.



ing to the Queen, much affrighted her.<sup>1</sup> The report of the miracle spread, and multitudes are said to have resorted to the tomb, whereon such a celestial light was shed, that the lame were enabled to walk, the blind to see, and the dumb to speak; all who laboured under any infirmity being healed.<sup>2</sup> "Among the rest, the murderess took her journey thither. Having mounted her horse, she urged him to go forward, when, lo! he who before outstripped the winds, and was full of ardour to bear his mistress, now, by the will of God, stood immovable; nor could her attendants move him at all with their shouts and blows: their labour was still in vain, when another horse was put in his place."<sup>3</sup> Neither the horse which the Queen rode, nor any other, would approach the spot, in spite of whips and spurs, and every other means tried to make them go forward. On which the murderess perceived "how great had been her offence against God, in shedding the blood of the innocent; and she repented deeply of her sin,<sup>4</sup> and gave up her intention of visiting the tomb, resolving to pass the rest of her days in penance and prayer:" of this resolve she evidently put off the accomplishment. So many miracles indeed were wrought by the sainted King, who, for his death, was surnamed "the Martyr," that it was thought desirable to transfer his relics to a more fitting receptacle. Some say, this holy ceremony was performed by his sister St. Editha; others relate that Earl Elfery, who was one of the most forward partizans of Elfrida, and had been one of those who destroyed the monasteries of the monks, bitterly repenting of his fault, removed the King's sacred body from that mean place, three years after, with great solemnity, to the monastery at Shaftesbury.<sup>5</sup>

The Saxon Chronicle<sup>6</sup> notices Edward's murder in these terms:—

"There has not been 'mid Angles  
A worse deed done  
Than this was,  
Since they first  
Britain-land sought.  
Men him murdered,  
But God him glorified.  
He was in life  
An earthly king;  
He is now after death  
A heavenly saint.  
Him would not his earthly  
Kinsmen avenge,  
But him hath his Heavenly Father  
Greatly avenged.  
The earthly murderers  
Would his memory  
On earth blot out,

<sup>1</sup> Brit. Sancta. A church was afterwards built upon the spot, to commemorate the restoration of the blind woman to sight.

<sup>2</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Holinshed, Roger of Wendover.

<sup>5</sup> "Though, even this way, he did not escape condign punishment, being eaten with worms in the following year."—Roger of Wendover.

<sup>6</sup> Saxon Chronicle; Brit. Sancta.

But the Lofty Avenger  
 Hath his memory  
 In the heavens  
 And on earth wide spread.  
 They who would not erewhile  
 To his living  
 Body bow down,  
 They now humbly  
 On knees bend  
 To his dead bones.  
 Now we may understand  
 That men's wisdom,  
 And their devices,  
 And their councils,  
 Are like nought  
 'Gainst God's resolves."

Ethelred "Atheling," or the "Noble," for whom Elfrida had been guilty of so great a crime, was too young at the time to be considered an accomplice in her guilt, yet it was with no small repugnance that the prelates and thanes bestowed on him a crown bought with the price of blood.<sup>1</sup> Dunstan more especially felt this, yet was compelled to anoint Ethelred, a measure not to be avoided. The ceremony of inauguration took place at Kingston-on-Thames, Sunday, April the 24th.<sup>2</sup> The new monarch, who is described as "a rare youth of a graceful person, fair countenance, and lofty stature, received the royal diadem from Dunstan of Canterbury, and Oswald of York, in the presence of ten bishops and the rest of the assembled clergy and nobles."<sup>3</sup> Dunstan is said on this occasion to have been moved, by a prophetic spirit, to declare to the young Prince, all the calamities to which the kingdom would be exposed during his reign in the following words:—"Because thou hast aspired to the crown by the death of thy brother, whom thy mother hath murdered, therefore hear the word of the Lord: the sword shall not depart from thy house, but shall furiously rage all the days of thy life, killing thy seed, till such time as thy kingdom shall be given to a people whose customs and language the nation thou now governest know not: neither shall thy sin, the sin of thy mother, and the sin of those men who were partakers of her counsels, and executors of her wicked design, be expiated but by a long and most severe vengeance."<sup>4</sup> Dunstan survived this event nine years, at the end of which he died, A. D. 988, after having witnessed the reigns of five monarchs, and part of that of a sixth, viz., Ethelred.

This last event took place many years before the decease of Elfrida, who survived her worst enemy and greatest rival. Indeed, it was probably the ascendancy of the Queen's faction which embittered and shortened Dunstan's life; for Edward the Martyr, ruled by his counsels, would have carried on everything as Edgar his father had left it; but, as Dunstan had perceived from the first, the ascendancy of the mother of

<sup>1</sup> The usual atonement for murder, called the Weregild, was paid by Elfrida at the time of Edward's death.—Lingard.

<sup>2</sup> A. D. 979.

<sup>3</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>4</sup> Holinshed.

Ethelred, and such as took part with her under her son's authority, was likely enough "to turn all upside down."<sup>1</sup> One of the motives attributed to Elfrida for the commission of Edward's murder, was her desire to subvert the authority of Dunstan. In this, however, she was unsuccessful, and gained only the popular aversion; for neither remorse nor hypocrisy could ever reinstate her in the public opinion.

But even yet Elfrida's crimes were not ended: in the year 981 another murder stained her guilty hand. Turner remarks as singular, the fact that this circumstance of the murder of Brithnoth, first Abbot of Ely, by Elfrida, should have escaped historians in general, being merely noticed in the following manner in the history of Ely:<sup>2</sup>—"It happened that, on a certain day, the Abbot Bridnod set out for King Ethelred's court, on affairs of the Church. When near Geldesdune, on his way through the wood called New Forest, he is said to have turned aside in search of some secluded spot for prayer, where, by accident, he discovered the Queen Ælstritha engaged under a tree, in her practices of witchcraft. The Queen uttered an expression of consternation at being detected, but the holy man, inwardly troubled, retreated as quickly as possible from the spot, and proceeded on his way to the court. Here he was magnificently received by the King, and having speedily accomplished the purpose of his journey, was on the point of returning home, rejoicing in the royal munificence. Not willing, however, to shame the Queen, though abhorrent, he first went to seek an interview with her, which she, when aware of his coming, desired might be strictly private, under a pretext of her requiring spiritual counsel. Summoning some women of her household, devoted to her will, she gave orders that he should be put to death. That no wound might appear on the body, the perpetrators were instructed to pierce him beneath the armpits with *bodkins* till he expired. Whereupon she cried out as if terrified by a sudden calamity. The servants and companions of the Abbot run to the spot, and hear with groans, of the previous arrival and sudden death of their master: with much grief and lamentation they place his body on a vehicle, and convey it back to Ely, where, not detecting any visible marks of violence, they commit it to the tomb. Thus was the first abbot of the holy church of Ely martyred,<sup>3</sup> by the contrivance of a good-for-nothing woman, preferring to fall into human hands, rather than to transgress the divine law, earning for his soul eternal joy in heaven, where he shall reign with all saints.

"As to the Queen, no one presumed even to whisper a suspicion, or bring an evil report upon her. And this matter might have continued to be hidden from all, had not she herself, by the divine mercy, been seized with compunction for her witchcrafts and abominable practices, and especially for the death of the glorious King Edward, her eldest son, to whose murder, (to make a way to the throne for Ethelred, her subsequent issue) she confessed, and for which deed she raised, at her own expense, the Convent of Werewelle. Here she spent the remainder of her days

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>2</sup> Gale's *Scriptores Hist. Elieni*.

<sup>3</sup> Some records place the event in A. D. 981.

in grief and penitence, and detailed with groans and anguish, the manner in which she had slain Bridnod, Abbot of Ely, as above related.”<sup>1</sup>

Elfrida's motive in this act, was as usual, her desire for power. The whole of the isle of Ely, had been purchased of King Edgar for a small sum, by Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, one of the Dunstan party, who in the year 970, placed in the monastery he had renewed, an abbot and monks, for whom he obtained many privileges from the monarch, with whom he was a great favorite. This abbot was Bridnoth, one of his own monks. Elfrida, after Ethelred's advancement to the throne, still maintained her spleen against Dunstan. Brithnoth had come to court on this occasion concerning matters connected with his church, and having *succeeded* in his mission, was about to depart with a joyful heart, when the Queen interfered and caused the Abbot's assassination. The “magic practices” he was said to have witnessed, were probably some of the Danish rites, or she had been consulting the wise-women on her own future destiny and that of Dunstan. Brithnoth had ruled Ely eleven years from his first appointment, and on his death, Elsy, or Elfsy, was appointed abbot in his place, by King Ethelred.<sup>2</sup> The brotherhood of Ely had their suspicions on the suddenness of their former abbot's decease, but the power of Elfrida silenced all. Not long after Brithnoth's murder, we find that, at the invitation of Bishop Ethelwold, the young King and his mother went, with several of the nobility, to visit the church of Ely, and took the opportunity to go in procession to the tomb of St. Etheldreda; when the young monarch, having a great love and affection for the Saint, promised, in the presence of all who were there assembled, to become from henceforth her devoted servant. In consequence, Ethelred afterwards, on several occasions testified great kindness and regard for that church, and as a particular mark of favour, was “pleased to grant that the head of the church of Ely should hold and enjoy the office and dignity of Chancellor in the King's court: the like he also granted to two other churches, viz., St. Augustine's in Canterbury, and Glastonbury, thus dividing the chancellorship between the abbots of those three monasteries, who were to enjoy the office by turns.”<sup>3</sup>

Elfrida was obviously desirous of making her peace with the offended clergy through the grants of Ethelred, then but twelve years of age. Of course it was she who held the administration of Church and State affairs, for a weakness of character was apparent in Ethelred from an early age, which was in a great measure attributable to the tyrannical and arbitrary influence maintained over him by his mother. As the King grew older this influence gradually declined, until Elfrida, finding herself the object of popular aversion, became aware that her power was at an end: on which, pretending to be moved by her conscience, she determined to bid farewell to the court,<sup>4</sup> and to close her days in a monastery, the usual resource of baffled ambition in these days. She accordingly founded in

<sup>1</sup> Rog. of Wend.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale.

<sup>3</sup> Dugdale; who places the visit of Ethelred in his brother's reign; but as Bridnoth was dead, and Elfsy abbot, it was plainly during his own.

<sup>4</sup> Lingard.



986, the Monastery of Werewell,<sup>1</sup> in expiation of the deaths of her first husband, Earl Ethelwold, and her son-in-law, Edward the Martyr; and within the walls of this edifice, of the Benedictine order, the yet beautiful Elfrida, renouncing her worldly grandeur, the incentive to her many crimes, exchanged the robes of royalty for sackcloth, and having professed herself a nun, dwelt in mourning and great penitence, a great part of her remaining life;<sup>2</sup> here she practised every kind of austerity. "Her flesh, which she had nourished in delicacy, she mortified with haircloth at Wherwell,"<sup>3</sup> sleeping on the ground, and afflicting her body with all kinds of sufferings,<sup>4</sup> such as fasting and various kinds of penance. Although the weregild, the price of murder, had been paid, the guilty Queen was a prey to remorse and apprehension, and among other self-inflicted punishments, is said to have "worn armour, made of little crosses, which she thought could alone secure her from an imaginary phantom, or evil spirit, which incessantly haunted her imagination."<sup>5</sup> Nor was private mortification enough; Elfrida tried to atone for her misdeeds by the publicity of her repentance, yet could she never reinstate herself in public opinion.<sup>6</sup> She expended large sums on the poor, and in building churches and monasteries, to the amount of her whole patrimony.<sup>7</sup> Elfrida founded a monastery at Andover, and another at Ambresbury in Wiltshire, a town on the Upper Avon. This last was founded A. D. 980, in expiation of the murder of Edward the Martyr; it was of the Benedictine order, and commended to the patronage of St. Mary, and St. Meliorus, a Cornish saint, whose relics were preserved there.<sup>8</sup>

Another abbey, or rather a small nunnery, was erected by her at Reading, on the spot now occupied by St. Mary's Church, being the third edifice founded in 980, the year after King Edward's death:<sup>9</sup> Henry I. suppressed this A. D. 1120, but the following year built a magnificent abbey there for two hundred Benedictine monks, which he dedicated to the honour of God, our Lady, and St. John the Evangelist, and appropriated to its use the revenues of the earlier foundation.

Elfrida's rapacity is seen in all her actions. Wulfreda, the injured nun of Wilton, had presided many years over the Monastery of Barking, when some dissensions arose between her and the priests of Barking, who referred their cause to Elfrida, requesting her to eject Wulfreda, and assume the government in her own person. To this proposal Elfrida readily assented, and on the Queen's assuming the presidency of the Monastery of Barking, Wulfreda was forced to retire to a religious house, which she had founded at Horton, in Devonshire.<sup>10</sup> Elfrida presided at Barking for twenty years, at the end of which, while still residing there, she was seized with a violent sickness, and in the probable dread of approaching dissolution, repenting the injury she had done Wulfreda, she caused her

<sup>1</sup> "Wherwell."—Dugdale.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale, Brit. Sancta.

<sup>3</sup> Roger of Wendover, Holinshed.

<sup>4</sup> Clavis Calendaria.

<sup>5</sup> Lingard.

<sup>6</sup> Holinshed, Gaillard, Bicknell, Lysons's *Magna Brit.*

<sup>7</sup> Dugdale.

<sup>8</sup> Britton and Brayley.

<sup>9</sup> Leland, Camden, Speed.

<sup>10</sup> Britton and Brayley.

to be reinstated in her former situation. Seven years afterwards Wulfreda died in London, whither she had retired to avoid the Danish army then invading England. This retaliation of Elfrida on her former rival in the King's affections, at so distant a period, marks how deeply the feelings of jealousy and revenge were implanted in her bosom.

Elfrida retired from Barking to Wherwell, where she died in 1002, in a state of extreme penitence, and at a very advanced age.<sup>1</sup> King Ethelred granted Wherwell, in the year of his mother's death, a charter of confirmation, on account of its being the place in which she ended her days, and which contained her last remains.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dugdale.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## EMMA OF NORMANDY,

SURNAMED "THE PEARL," QUEEN OF ETHELRED "THE UNREADY,"  
AND CANUTE "THE GREAT."

The Pearl of Normandy—Parentage of Emma—Quarrels settled—Emma's Marriage with Ethelred, 1002, at Winchester—She receives the popular name of *Elfgiva*—Unsuitableness of Ethelred—His personal appearance—The songs of *Gunnlaugr the Scald*—The Sagas: their value—*Danegelt*, its odiousness to the English—Massacre of the Danes on the Eve of St. Brice—*Gunilda's* fate—Her anathema—Emma's sorrow concealed—The neglect of Ethelred towards his wife—She appeals to her brother—Anger of the Duke of Normandy—Reconciliation—Hugh and Alwyn—Siege of Exeter—Oath of fealty to Emma's unborn babe—Birth of her son, Edward the Confessor—Alfred, the eldest son, set aside on account of a prophecy—Emma flies from the troubles in England, with her children, to Normandy—Remains there two years—They are followed by Ethelred—"Unready" a title fitting for the weak King—London Bridge is broken down—Edmund Ironside—*Alghitha* at Malmesbury Abbey—Death of Ethelred—Canute marries Emma—Her weight in gold—Influence of Emma—Mutual attachment—Danish Dandies—Drinking-cups—Back-gammon—Poets—Story of Canute and his courtiers—Splendid gifts to abbeys—The King's verses—*Vauland*, the smith—*Hardicanute* and *Gunilda*—King Olaf—Death of Canute—Earl Godwin's power—Treachorous letter to Emma's sons—Murder of Alfred—Suspensions—Harold—Emma's exile and return—*Hardicanute*—The gilded ship—The dwarf *Mimicon*—Death of *Hardicanute*—Edward succeeds—His conduct to his mother—The trial of the ploughshares—Triumph—Death of Emma.

THE first alliance between the English and the Normans, who afterwards ruled England with such despotic sway, took place in 1002, when Emma, who for her beauty was surnamed "the Pearl of Normandy," became the wife of Ethelred, the reigning monarch.

The family of Emma was of Scandinavian origin. Rollo, or Robert, her great-grandfather, after an unsuccessful invasion of England, in the reign of Alfred, had turned his arms against the natives of the neighbouring coast of France, who, finding themselves unable to oppose their warlike invaders, offered Robert a settlement in their territories. Charles the Simple, then on the French throne, yielded to Rollo part of the Province of Neustria, and bestowed on him at the same time the hand of his daughter Gisla, on condition that the Dane should do him homage as a vassal. The territory ceded to Rollo from that time went by the name of Normandy; and the Duke, when he died, bequeathed it to his son, Duke William I., who held it for twenty-five years. This prince was succeeded by Richard his son, then a minor, whose wife was Agnes, daughter of Hugh the Great, Earl of Paris, by whom he had no children. By Gunnora, his second wife, he had three sons, Richard, Robert, and

Mauger ; and three daughters, Emma-Agnes, Helloie or Alix, and Maud. The eldest of these princesses, named after Richard's first consort, was afterwards Queen of England, Alix espoused Geoffrey, Earl of Bretagne, and Maud became the wife of Eudes, Earl of Chartres and Blois.

Ethelred, King of England, had quarrelled with Duke Richard I., on some subject which has not been handed down to us. A fleet was prepared by Ethelred for the invasion of Normandy, and Richard, on his part, arrested all the English pilgrims and merchants in his dominions, some of whom he threw into prison, while others he condemned to death. Pope John XV. employed his legate Leo, Bishop of Treves, to reconcile the contending princes. Leo visited first Ethelred, and afterwards Richard, and, at his request, commissioners were appointed to meet at Rouen, when it was agreed that all ancient causes of dissension should be forgotten, that a perpetual peace should subsist between the King of England and the Marquess' of Normandy, their children born and to be born, and all their true liege-men ; that every infraction of this peace should be repaired by satisfactory compensation ; and that neither prince should harbour the subjects nor the enemies of the other, without a written permission.<sup>2</sup> This, the oldest treaty now extant between any of our kings and a foreign power, is drawn up in the name of the Pope, and confirmed by the oaths and marks of one bishop and two thanes on the part of Ethelred, and of one bishop and two barons on the part of Richard :<sup>3</sup> it was signed at Rouen, March 1st, 991.

In the eighth year after Ethelred's accession, he had married Ethelgina, daughter of Earl Thorold, by whom he had five children, Edmond, surnamed Ironside, for his strength of mind and body, Edwy, and three daughters. The Queen dying in 1002, Ethelred sent ambassadors to Normandy to demand the hand of Emma, sister of the reigning duke, Richard II. It is not unlikely that some overtures had been made at an earlier period, prior to Ethelred's first marriage, for this beautiful princess, who was then but a child ; for Roger of Wendover says that Emma was the cause of the quarrel between her father and Ethelred, but no particulars have reached us.

Duke Richard II. gave a most honourable reception to the English embassy. The negotiation for the marriage was speedily concluded, and the same year that witnessed the death of Ethelgina, saw the young and blooming "Flower of Normandy" solemnly bestowed on the recently widowed King. In Lent, 1002, the new Queen came over to England, attended by a numerous retinue of French men and women.<sup>4</sup> The nuptial ceremony was performed at Winchester, which, from that time, became a favourite residence of Emma, and was the spot in which she passed the earlier years of her married life. Both Saxon and Norman chroniclers unite in representing the youthful Queen Emma<sup>5</sup> as in a pecu-

<sup>1</sup> The title of Marquess or Duke is indiscriminately used, in the treaty, for the father of Emma.

<sup>2</sup> Malmesbury says that the subjects of either Prince were to be provided with passports under seal, in travelling through the other's dominions.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.

<sup>4</sup> Ingulphus, Gale, Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>5</sup> Gemma and Ymma, Imma and Eme are various readings of the name Emma,



liar degree gifted with elegance and beauty; so that many flattering epithets had been bestowed on her—as “the Pearl,” “the Flower,” or “the Fair Maid” of Normandy. As she readily adopted the manners of the English on her arrival, she became so much beloved by them as to receive the popular surname of Elfgifa, the Elf or “Fairy Gift,” and is called in the Saxon Chronicle Emma Elfgiva: several of her female predecessors among the queens-consort of England having, as has been before named, assumed this title, in honour of the wife of Edmund the Pious.

Ethelred was much older than Emma, being about thirty-four years of age at the time of his second marriage, and in some respects exceedingly unsuited to win the affections of the young and lovely bride whom he had selected. The son of Elfrida, who had perhaps herself witnessed the second nuptials of Ethelred, or at least lived to counsel them, inherited his mother’s beauty of person, with many of its accompanying vices. He is represented to have been “a tall, handsome man, elegant in manners, beautiful in countenance, and interesting in his deportment;”<sup>1</sup> yet Malmesbury characterises his personal appearance, sarcastically calling him “a *fine sleeping figure*.” Amongst other weaknesses, he was open to flattery, as is evident from the patronage he afforded to Gunnlaugr the Scald, who, having sailed to London from Norway, presented himself to the king with an heroic poem which he had composed on the *royal virtues*.

The adulatory style of this composition, which the author sang before the English Monarch, may be seen by the following lines:—

“The soldiers of the King, and his subjects,  
The powerful army of England,  
Obey Ethelred,  
As if he was an *angel of the beneficent Deity*.”

Ethelred, having listened to the poet, bestowed on him in return for his verse “a purple tunic, lined with the richest furs, and adorned with fringe,” and gave him an appointment within the palace. On his departure from the court, in the following spring, Gunnlaugr received from his royal patron a gold ring, of the weight of seven ounces, accompanied by a request that he would return in the autumn. The Scald visited Ireland and sang: “the king there wished to give him two ships, but was told by his treasurer that poets had always clothes, or swords, or gold rings given them. Gunnlaugr accordingly had a present of fine garments and a gold ring.” In the Orkneys he was rewarded with a silver axe.

The Scalds were persons of some importance, and having much in their power, were generally well treated by those monarchs who were anxious for their good report. They were, says Laing, a kind of “wandering scholars, natives generally of Iceland, and a class of more consequence than mere amusement at a court could have made them.”<sup>2</sup> They were, in fact, the recorders of events, and many of their songs, or sagas, are family annals. “They were frequently employed as messengers and

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which some say is identical with Amy, in Latin written Amata and Eutrophine; in Greek it signifies a *good nurse*, or help-giver, as the Saxons say.

<sup>1</sup> Turner, from Gunnlaugr Saga.

<sup>2</sup> Laing’s Norway.

ambassadors, who carried the tokens which monarchs or nobles exchanged with each other. These tokens were not merely gifts, but had a meaning known to the personages, and accredited the messenger." Such personages were necessary at a time when reading and writing were rare accomplishments amongst princes.

"The language of the Scalds seems to have been understood at the courts of all the branches of the Scandinavian people; the same Scald appears to have visited on business or pleasure the courts of Rouen, of England, of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and there is no mention of any difficulty arising from difference of language in any of the transactions of individuals. These were frequently adventurers passing from the service of one monarch to another."<sup>1</sup>

The sagas are extremely valuable, as the Scalds recorded the passing events of the time, and any falsehood or exaggeration would have been detected by contemporaries.

Ethelred had made the alliance with Normandy from policy, to gain aid against his formidable enemies, the Danes, who at that time were incorporated among the English, and led a careless and easy life, treating them as though they were their servants and drudges, while their wives and daughters became slaves to their pleasure, whence they had even obtained the epithet of "Lord Danes." Great part, indeed, of England had a government according to Danelagh. All this had been brought about by the pusillanimity of Ethelred, who, instead of meeting his foes in fair and open strife, had bought off their hostilities by a yearly sum of money, known under the name of Dane-gelt, long the most odious tax felt in England. Every year these intruders became more dangerous and increasingly powerful, and by degrees settled in the very heart of his dominions. Ethelred, therefore, in marrying Emma, whose mother Gun-nora, was descended of an eminent Danish family, expected the alliance would be instrumental in obliging the Danes to ameliorate their conduct,<sup>2</sup> if, indeed, he could not obtain of Duke Richard's assistance to wholly extirpate them from the country, which groaned beneath their tyranny. In these calculations, however, Ethelred was grievously mistaken. The Normans and Danes were, as has been shown, descended from the same stock,<sup>3</sup> and the Norman Duke did not perceive any motive sufficiently strong, as regarded his own interest, to induce him to embroil himself in war with the relatives of his mother for the sake of entering into the schemes of the husband of his sister Emma. Whether Ethelred was so blind as to believe that his new ally would sanction the unparalleled act of cruelty of which he was guilty, in the very year of his marriage, and almost before the rejoicings for that event were over, it seems hard to believe; yet so puffed up was the weak King with his notion of newly-acquired power that, instigated by his favourites, he gave orders for a general massacre of the Danes throughout the country. The day before

<sup>1</sup> Laing's Norway.

<sup>2</sup> Echard.

<sup>3</sup> "The Earls of Rouen are descended from Gange Rolf; they have long reckoned themselves of kin to the chiefs in Norway, and hold them in such respect, that they always were the greatest friends of the Northmen, and every Northman found a friendly country in Normandy, if he required it."—Snorro.

St. Brice's Day, secret letters were sent by Ethelred to every city, commanding the English at an appointed hour to destroy the Danes by fire and sword.<sup>1</sup> Neither age nor sex was spared—men, women, and children being mercilessly slaughtered; the Saxon females even falling on their helpless foes, unarmed, and on a day of festival, maiming with scythes and reaping-hooks those whom they could not kill. Amongst those who perished was Gunilda, sister of Sweyn, the Danish monarch, who had been given as a hostage for the treaty of peace concluded between her brother and the perfidious Ethelred. Having embraced Christianity, and married Palling, a Saxon courtier, she had settled in this country. This noble lady beheld her husband and children massacred before her eyes: she herself was killed by strokes from a lance. In the agony of her grief for the loved ones who were falling around her, her words to the Saxon murderers were, "God will punish you, and my brother will avenge my death." Her prophetic denunciation was fulfilled, for England not long after sunk beneath the Danish yoke.<sup>2</sup>

Those who seek an excuse for such an act on the part of Ethelred, assert that he had cause to suspect the Danes of a plot to murder him and his Witan, and to seize upon the kingdom. This was the pretext for the atrocious action of which he was guilty, and which, instead of consolidating his power, annihilated the peace and security of the kingdom. At a moment when he had just formed an alliance with Emma, descended of the same blood as the victims, the policy of this massacre was singularly shortsighted. The young Queen's horror must have been extreme when she found that the solemnities and festivities of her marriage were thus converted into a scene of general bloodshed and mourning. The spirit of the ruthless Elfrida seems to have governed Ethelred on this occasion; and perhaps Emma's indignant sorrows were checked by him as violently as when his mother had beaten him "with waxen candles," when mourning over the murder of his own brother, Edward the Martyr, the victim of her ambition.

There were other causes for trouble in the mind of Emma, who, though possessed of unrivalled beauty, had failed in securing the affections of her husband. From the time of their marriage, the King had neglected her company, and associated with unworthy favourites, both male and female.<sup>3</sup> Emma felt this deeply: she had been idolised by her own countrymen, and was beloved by her new Saxon subjects. Young, lovely, learned, and highly accomplished, she felt that the treatment of Ethelred was so degrading to her merit, that she resolved at length to return to Normandy. Roger of Wendover seems to infer faults on her side, as well as on that of her husband; but he acknowledges that "the King was so petulant to his wife," that he would scarcely admit her to his intimacy; and she, on her part, "proud of her high descent, and irritated against him, blackened him in no small degree to her *father*."<sup>4</sup> The Duke of Nor-

<sup>1</sup> Rapin compares the Danish massacre to that of the Romans under Boadicea. The day selected for it was Sunday, too, the festival of St. Brice, when they were unarmed and taking their bath.

<sup>2</sup> Rivalité de France et de l'Angleterre.

<sup>3</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>4</sup> It should be her *brother*.



mandy, on receiving the account sent by Emma of her ill-treatment, despatched messengers to fetch her back to her own country; but, alarmed at the probable consequences, Ethelred thought it better to reconcile his Queen, which having effected, the Norman ambassadors returned without her. From that time, however, the Duke exhibited much coldness towards Ethelred, doubtless being aware of the hollowness of the apparent reconciliation; and when Ethelred sought his assistance against the Danes, he could not obtain attention to his request.

The expectations that Emma's marriage would turn out very advantageous to England, therefore, failed altogether. The Normans, on the contrary, instead of procuring defenders for England, brought across the sea "place-hunters" and ambitious men, craving money and dignities;<sup>1</sup> and this introduction of the Norman was the first link of a chain of events which led to the entire subversion of England, and afforded an opportunity for William of Normandy to lay claim to the throne, which he obtained by art and force of arms.<sup>2</sup>

Two persons had come over to England in the train of Emma, who were destined to act a prominent part in her eventful career, and had been received with great honour by Ethelred. These were Hugh and Alwyn, both Normans by birth. The latter was of high rank, being a relative of the ducal family, and accordingly had escorted the young Queen in the capacity of "counsellor or guardian."<sup>3</sup> On his arrival he was made superintendent of the royal household, and created Earl of Southampton. The courage and fidelity of Alwyn were afterwards of great service to Ethelred during his wars against the Danes; and at a later period still his history becomes involved more particularly with that of Queen Emma, to whose fortunes he ever remained a firm and tried friend. Hugh, the other Norman attendant on the Queen, was, at her request, created Governor of Exeter,<sup>4</sup> with the title of Earl of Devonshire. Emma herself was "Lady" of Exeter. He does not appear to have been equally faithful, to judge by the events which followed.

In the year succeeding that of Emma's marriage and the Danish massacre, Exeter was besieged by King Sweyn (A. D. 1003); for that Ethelred had privately put to death all the Danes in the several cities of England, had reached the ears of the brother of the injured Gunilda, who, at the head of a great navy, landed in Cornwall, burning with rage and indignation. Exeter bravely sustained a siege from the Danes for the space of two months, but at the end of that time was finally taken "by the treachery of Hugh, its governor, the Queen's countryman." On the surrender of the city, Sweyn put all to fire and sword, and razed it to the ground, besides taking great plunder.<sup>5</sup>

Turketil, at that period, describing the condition of the English to Sweyn, says, "a country illustrious and powerful; a king asleep, solici-

<sup>1</sup> Thierry's Norman Conquest.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Milner.

<sup>4</sup> Caradoc, Fabian, Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>5</sup> Exeter was afterwards restored by Canute, but appears to have been still attached to the Queens of England; for after the Conquest, we find it holding out against William, under Githa, the mother of Harold.



tous only about women and wine, and trembling at war; *hated by his people*, and derided by strangers; generals envious of each other; and weak governors, ready to fly at the first shout of battle.”<sup>1</sup> It is said of Elfrie, a Saxon bishop of that time, that “he considered the state of things so bad that he believed doom’s-day to be approaching, and the world very near its end.”<sup>2</sup>

About this time, Emma was called to be present at a very affecting and remarkable scene, peculiarly characteristic of the superstition of the times. The Queen had already become mother of one son by Ethelred, to whom the name of Alfred had been given, and she was a second time about to give birth to a child, who afterwards wore the crown under the title of Edward the Confessor. The great rapidity and progress of the conquests of the Danes, owing to the pusillanimous and tardy conduct of Ethelred, justly surnamed “the Unready,” from being never prepared to face his foes, caused a great council to be held, to deliberate on the affairs of the kingdom, then nearly overrun by the enemy. On this occasion, Queen Emma was present; and Ethelred, being desirous of appointing a successor, requested the opinion of the council. Some recommended Edmond “Ironside,” son of his first Queen, so surnamed on account of his bodily strength, while others gave the preference to Alfred, the son of Emma, still in his infancy: yet, it having been predicted by one of the assembly that the former should enjoy but a very short life, and that the latter should perish immaturely, the wishes of all concentrated on the child of which the Queen was then pregnant; and the King, assenting to this election, the nobility took an oath of fealty to the unborn babe.<sup>3</sup> In the first compartment of the screen which adorns the chapel of King Edward the Confessor, at Westminster, this subject is represented. In this piece of sculpture Queen Emma appears standing in the midst of a large assembly, with her left hand upon her waist. All the figures appear to have the right arm extended upwards, as if in the act of swearing allegiance.<sup>4</sup>

Emma gave birth to her son Edward at Islip, in Oxfordshire, and the second compartment of the before-mentioned screen in the chapel of St. Edward represents the event. It is curious on account of its containing in sculpture the ancient form of a state-bed:<sup>5</sup> in the back-ground are two of the Queen’s attendants with the infant prince in their arms. At a subsequent period, Edward the Confessor received the town which had been the scene of his nativity, from his mother, Queen Emma, for his own maintenance; and long after, when he came to the throne, he bestowed that place, among other royal gifts, on the Abbey of Westminster, so that it became the country-residence first of the abbots, and then of

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury; Kemble’s Saxons in Britain.

<sup>2</sup> Turner.

<sup>3</sup> Life of Edward the Confessor; Neale’s Westminster Abbey.

<sup>4</sup> Neale.

<sup>5</sup> A bed, of a very simple construction, is exhibited in Strutt’s Saxon Antiquities, plate 13, fig. 2. It seems to be nothing more than a thick boarded bottom; the covering is very thin, and the pillow stiff and hard; in short, from the view of the whole together, ease was but little considered. This (though so rude in appearance), being a royal bed, is ornamented with curtains, which are fastened to the top, but they had also others that slid with rings on an iron rod.

the deans of Westminster. In Edward's original charter, he speaks of it in terms thus translated: <sup>1</sup> "Edward, king, greeteth Wlsy, bishop, and Gyrth, earl, and all my nobles in Oxfordshire. And I tell you that I have given to Christ and St. Peter at Westminster, *that small village wherein I was born*, by name GITHSLEPE, <sup>2</sup> and one hide at Mersie, scot-free and rent-free, with all the things which belong thereunto, in wood and field, in meadows and waters, with church and with the immunities of the church, as fully and as largely, and as free, as it stood in mine own hand; and also as my mother Emma, upon my right of primogeniture, for my maintenance, gave it me entire, and bequeathed it to the family."<sup>3</sup>

Emma and her children had been sent to the Isle of Wight for safety, from Winchester, which was threatened with destruction by the advancing army of Sweyn; Ethelred himself remaining in London, in a state of inactivity and apprehension, neither daring to assemble or to lead an army against his enemies, "lest the nobles of his realm, who had been unjustly treated by him, should desert him in the battle, and give him up to the vengeance of his foes." Tormented by these distressing apprehensions, the wretched King secretly withdrew from the city of London, and arriving at Southampton, crossed over to the Isle of Wight, whence he dispatched Queen Emma, with his two sons Alfred and Edward, and their guardians Elfhun, Bishop of Durham, and Elfsey, Abbot of Peterborough, into Normandy to Duke Richard her brother, who received them with honour and respect. Eadric, too, King Ethelred's kinsman, crossed over with the Queen, and a hundred and forty soldiers, and resided with her two years, attending her with great state. They crossed the sea in the month of August.<sup>4</sup> The Bishop of London also accompanied the Queen and her family as their protector.<sup>5</sup> The royal party carried with

<sup>1</sup> Kennett's Parochial Antiquities.

<sup>2</sup> Islip.

<sup>3</sup> The King appears to have claimed the power, not only of disposing of the benefice or fee after the death of the tenant, but also of controlling the distribution of his other possessions. Hence the vassal in his will was always anxious to obtain the confirmation of his superior, and to make provision for the payment of what was termed by the Saxons the *heriot*, by the Normans the *relief*. Elphelm, after leaving his heriot to the King, concludes his will in these words:—"And now I beseech thee, my beloved lord, that my last testament may stand, and that thou do not permit it to be annulled."

The heriot was to be paid "within twelve months from the death of the last possessor: and was apportioned to the rank which he bore in the State." [Lingard, Sir H. Ellis, &c.] The payment preserved the estate in his family, if he died intestate, or was remitted in case of his falling in battle in his lord's service. In the stormy season of Ethelred's warfare against the Danes, and probably with a view to the future welfare of her children, in the event of her quitting England for her brother's protection, Emma adopted this precaution. The heriot, or bequest of Queen Elfgifa, in 1012, we are told, was as follows:—"She left the King six horses, six shields, six spears, one cup, two rings, worth one hundred and twenty mancuses each, and various lands."

The word *heriot* signifies "habiliments of war," and Canute was the first who established the compulsory heriot in England.

<sup>4</sup> Roger of Wendover, Fabian, Ran. Higden.

<sup>5</sup> "And the King sent Bishop Elfhun, with the Ethelings Edward and Alfred, over sea, that he might have charge of them."—Roger of Wendover.

them the treasures of Ethelred, either for security, or to obtain, through their medium, assistance from the Duke, in the recovery of their kingdom;¹ among other valuables, Queen Emma took with her, "an incomparable copy of the Gospels, such as had never before been seen in Normandy," which she presented to the Church of St. Peter.<sup>2</sup>

Having obtained a favourable reception for herself,<sup>3</sup> and ascertained the friendly disposition of her relatives towards Ethelred, Queen Emma persuaded her husband to throw himself on the hospitality of his Norman neighbours. Accordingly, "when King Ethelred heard of the honourable reception they had met with, he followed himself in the month of January, and laid all his troubles before the noble Duke, who much compassionated his calamities, and soothed his grief with words of consolation."<sup>4</sup>

Some authors relate that Ethelred, and Edmund "Ironside," secretly embarked at the same time as the Queen, and personally escorted her to the home of her youth.<sup>5</sup> The Saxon Chronicle, however, which calls Emma "the Lady," states that, after her departure to Normandy, the King left the fleet<sup>6</sup> at mid-winter, and went to the Isle of Wight, "and was there during that tide; and after that tide, he went over the sea to Richard, and was there with him until such times as Sweyn was dead." The same record places Emma's visit to Normandy, in 1013. Ethelred was very splendidly entertained by his generous brother-in-law.

On the death of Sweyn, the people recalled Ethelred, although the fleet, and also the Danes, had elected Canute as his father's successor. Ethelred, with his usual *unreadiness* to avail himself of fortune's favours, would not venture to England till his son Edmund Ironside, whom he sent over to ascertain the disposition of the people, had returned, when having been informed that, "if he would make haste" all things were favourable, he departed for England, with certain succours afforded by the brother of Queen Emma. The people testified great joy at his return, and Ethelred, on his part, swore new allegiance to them, and promised to reform his administration. The return of Emma to England could not have been productive of much comfort to her at this time, when the greater part of the country was, as in the reign of Alfred the Great, overrun by the Danes. In spite of promises, hopes, and aspirations for better things, nothing seems to have prospered.

Famine, pestilence, and war, distinguished the unfortunate reign of Ethelred, and taxation burthened the people. The year of the King's

<sup>1</sup> Echard.

<sup>2</sup> Jumièges.

<sup>3</sup> Rouen, the residence of the ducal family, "was anciently called Ruda or Rudaburg; whence the Earls of Normandy were called Ruda-jarlar, the Rouen Earls, not Earls of Normandy." During the period that Emma resided abroad, with her brother, Elfsy, Abbot of Peterborough, "who was there with her, went to the minster which is called Boneval, where St. Florentine's body lay. There found he a poor place, a poor abbot, and poor monks; for they had been plundered. Then bought he there, of the abbot and of the monks, St. Florentine's body, all except the head, for five hundred pounds; and then, when he came home again, then made he an offering of it to Christ and St. Peter."—Saxon Chronicle, Milton, Laing's Notes on Snorro.

<sup>4</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>5</sup> Harding.

<sup>6</sup> Which lay in the Thames.



return was marked not only by a renewal of the war, but by another unlooked-for event. "On the eve of St. Michael's mass, came the great sea-flood wide throughout this land, and ran so far up as it never before had done, and washed away many towns, and a countless number of people."<sup>1</sup> But adversity, thus poured forth in full measure on the sovereign head, failed in its effect, and Ethelred was still oppressive, weak, and irresolute; thus, though at the head of a powerful army, he was unable to maintain his royal rights; his son Edmund could not even prevail on him to head his troops in person. The weak King, even feigned illness, as an excuse for remaining in London, where he alone fancied himself to be secure.

On his return, Ethelred had ordered the army, which lay at Greenwich, to be paid 21,000*l.*,<sup>2</sup> and sent a general invitation to all who would enter his service. Many flocked around him, and among the rest "came King Olaf, with a great troop of Northmen, to his aid." Of this great leader, it is said that "he had in his ship 100 men armed in coats of ringmail, and in foreign helpmets. The most of his men had white shields, on which the holy cross was gilt; but some had painted it in blue or red. He had also had the cross painted in front on all the helmets, in a pale colour. He had a white banner on which was a serpent figured." The dress of Olaf must have been costly, for mention is made of a present he received from Princess Ingegerd, of a long cloak of fine linen, richly embroidered with gold and with silk points.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most interesting portions of national British history relating to this period, is contained in Snorro's Sea-Kings of Norway, and as it gives a picture of the intestine discord of London at that time, and also of the city itself, it may not be ill-timed to introduce it here. King Olaf and others having joined Ethelred, the Chronicle proceeds to state that "they steered first to London, and sailed into the Thames with their fleet; but the Danes had a castle within. On the other side of the river is a great trading-place, which is called *Sudeviki*.<sup>4</sup> There the Danes raised a great work, dug large ditches, and within had built a bulwark of stone, timber, and turf, where they had stationed a strong army. King Ethelred ordered a great assault; but the Danes defended themselves bravely, and King Ethelred could make nothing of it. Between the castle and Southwark there was a bridge so broad that two wagons could pass each other upon it." On the bridge were raised barricades, both towers and wooden parapets, in the direction of the river, which were nearly breast high, and under the bridge were piles driven into the bottom of the river. Now, when the attack was made, the troops stood on the bridge everywhere, and defended themselves. King Ethelred was very anxious to get possession of the bridge, and he called together all the chiefs to consult how they should get the bridge broken down. Then said King Olaf, he would attempt to lay his fleet alongside of it, if the

<sup>1</sup> Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Snorro.

<sup>3</sup> *Silki-ræmor* appear to have been silk tassels or ties on the cloak of fine linen (*PELLI*), which was embroidered with gold.—Laing's Notes on Snorro.

<sup>4</sup> Or Southwark.



other ships would do the same. It was then determined in this council that they should lay their war forces under the bridge; and each made himself ready with ships and men.

“King Olaf ordered great platforms of floating wood to be tied together with hazel bands, and for this he took down old houses; and with these, as a roof, he covered over his ships so widely, that it reached over the ships’ sides. Under this screen he set pillars so high and stout that there both was room for swinging their swords, and the roofs were strong enough to withstand the stones cast down upon them. Now when the fleet and men were ready, they rowed up along the river; but when they came near the bridge, there were cast down upon them so many stones and missile weapons, such as arrows and spears, that neither helmet nor shield could withstand it; and the ships themselves were so greatly damaged, that many retreated out of it. But King Olaf, and the Northmen’s fleet with him, rowed quite up under the bridge, laid their cables around the piles which supported it, and then rowed off with all the ships as far as they could down the stream. The piles were thus shaken in bottom, and were loosened under the bridge. Now as the armed troops stood thick of men upon the bridge, and there were likewise many heaps of stones and other weapons upon it, and the piles under it being loosened and broken, the bridge gave way, and a great part of the men upon it fell into the river, and all the others fled, some into the castle, some into Southwark. Thereafter Southwark was stormed and taken. Now when the people in the castle saw that the river Thames was mastered, and that they could not hinder the passage of ships up into the country, they became afraid, surrendered the tower, and took Ethelred to be their king. So says Otta Swarte :—

‘London Bridge is broken down,—  
Gold is won, and bright renown,  
Shields resounding,  
War-horns sounding,  
Hildur<sup>1</sup> shouting in the din!  
Arrows singing,  
Mail-coats ringing —  
Odin makes our Olaf win!’

“And he also composed these :

King Ethelred has found a friend;  
Brave Olaf will his throne defend —  
In bloody fight  
Maintain his right,  
Win back his land  
With blood-red hand,  
And Edmund’s son upon his throne replace —  
Edmund, the star of every royal race!’

“Sigvat also relates as follows :—

‘At London Bridge stout Olaf gave  
Odin’s law to his war-men brave —  
‘To win or die!’  
And their foemen fly;

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<sup>1</sup> The Scandinavian Bellona.

Some by the dyke-side refuge gain,  
 Some in their tents on Southwark plain!  
 This sixth attack  
 Brought victory back.' ”

Olaf passed that winter with Ethelred, to whom all the country far around was brought into subjection; but the Thingmen<sup>1</sup> and the Danes held many castles, besides a great part of the country. Olaf was commander of the King's forces when they took Canterbury, where many were killed and the castle burnt: this is reckoned his eighth battle: he was also entrusted with the whole land defence of England, according to the Chronicle of Snorro, and sailed round the coast with his ships of war. After another battle against the Danes at Newport, in the Isle of Wight, Olaf scoured the country, “taking scott of the people, and plundering where it was refused. So says Ottar:—

‘The English race could not resist thee,  
 With money thou madest them assist thee;  
 Unsparingly thou madest them pay  
 A scott to thee in every way:  
 Money, if money could be got—  
 Goods, cattle, household gear, if not.  
 Thy gathered spoil, borne to the strand,  
 Was the best wealth of English land.’

So that the friends of Ethelred were no more the friends of the English people than his enemies, and a woful season was his reign for them all.”

Olaf remained in England for three years. The country was in a most pitiable condition, and if men could hardly feel themselves safe upon even a throne, how much more unprotected was the position of the other sex. It is hard to say what kind of court was that of Queen Emma at this troubled period of her life. With her young children forced from place to place, she still braved her fate with fortitude, and generously strove to animate the drooping spirits of her too desponding husband. It must have been to her a bitter and painful season, to behold the fierce strife maintained between the party of a husband such as Ethelred, and the countrymen of her mother, to whom she felt a preference; and had she been placed at the helm, probably the destiny of England had been very different to what it was. Ethelred's cowardice and extortions ruined his cause, and involved both himself and his family in ruin. There was, however, one of the sons of Ethelred whose bravery redeemed his father's character, though not his fortunes; and this was Edmund “Ironside,” who comes into notice in a remarkable transaction about this period, A. D. 1015.

In those times of civil strife and warfare, the gift of female beauty was too often dangerous to its possessor, and many a high-born damsel and lofty princess was glad to enshrine herself from public gaze, in the quiet and safe seclusion of a monastery, preferring rather to forsake the world,

<sup>1</sup> Thingmen were hired men-at-arms, employed at the Danish court as a body-guard for their sovereigns. They formed bodies of standing troops over levies of peasantry, and to their superiority the victories of Sweyn and Canute have been ascribed. — Laing's Notes on Snorro's Sea-Kings.

than to risk the dangers she would inevitably be exposed to on every side, whether Saxon or Danish. Such, though frequently the case, was not the reason of the beautiful Alghitha having become the inmate of the Abbey of Malmesbury. She had been sent there as a prisoner, by orders of Ethelred.

Alghitha, a lady of noble parentage and great beauty, was the wife of Sigferth, a nobleman of Danish extraction, who enjoyed extensive territories in Northumberland. The avaricious Ethelred coveted these rich possessions, and for the purpose of seizing on the Earl's estates, resolved to accomplish his death. Accordingly, the King convened a council at Oxford, A. D. 1015, in which Sigferth, and another noble Danish lord, were accused of a conspiracy by Edric Streone, the King's favourite counsellor, the assembly being composed of Danes as well as English; yet was the motive of the King in the matter very evident. The unfortunate nobles were betrayed into confidence, and put to death in the King's own chamber. Their servants were so exasperated, that they would have revenged their murder, had they not been overpowered, and compelled to retreat to the Church of St. Frideswide, where they took refuge in the steeple, and defended themselves, until that being set on fire, they perished in the flames.<sup>1</sup>

On this melancholy occasion Alghitha had been her husband's companion to Oxford, and on his death was seized and forcibly conveyed to Malmesbury under the royal mandate. The beauty of the widow of Sigferth was, however, so noted, and the nobleness of her disposition so well known, that Prince Edmund was induced, from curiosity to become acquainted with her, to feign business in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury. In an interview with Alghitha he fell deeply in love, and resolved to make her his wife. The match, as might have been expected, was strongly opposed by Ethelred, the lady being in his own power, and her rich possessions under his control; but the paternal prohibition did not deter Edmund from carrying off and espousing the lady of his choice, an event of great importance to the after-history of England. On his marriage, Edmund required his father to cede the territories of Sigferth, in Northumberland, which amounted to the living of an earl. On the King's refusal, Edmund, without his authority, went into Northumberland, where the farmers and tenants of Sigferth's estates willingly received him as their lord, influenced by his union with Alghitha. This event embittered the close of Ethelred's career. The King survived his son's marriage scarcely twelve months, during which he not only beheld his eldest son and destined heir thus rebel against him, but his enemies triumphant. After frequently feigning illness as one excuse among many to evade his foes, domestic trouble and vexation at repeated losses caused the King to fall dangerously sick in earnest, and he died at the age of fifty, after a reign of thirty-seven years. His last remains were interred in St. Paul's, London, where they were seen by Speed before the destruction of the church, who says "his bones yet remain in the north

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<sup>1</sup> Holinshead.

wall of the chancel, in a chest of grey marble, reared on four small pillars, and covered with a coped stone of the same."

Ethelred had a numerous family: Edmund "Ironside" and Edwy, with their three sisters, all born by this King's first marriage, survived him; and Alfred, Edward, and Goda, the children of Emma.

Popular consent, and the late King's will, accorded the crown to Edmund Ironside, who was accordingly crowned with the usual honours at St. Paul's, the ceremony being performed by the Archbishop of York. Canute, notwithstanding, caused himself to be proclaimed at Southampton, and not long after besieged Edmund in London.

Within the city at this critical moment were Edmund and his brother, the Queen-Dowager Emma, two bishops, and several distinguished thanes. An army of 27,000 men and a fleet of 340 sail had been collected in the mouth of the Thames. Canute found it easy to cut off the communication by land, but to prevent ingress and egress by water was more difficult. As the fortifications of the bridge impeded the navigation of the river, by dint of labour a channel was dug on the right bank. Through it was dragged a considerable number of ships, and the Northmen became masters of the Thames above as well as below the city.<sup>1</sup> While thus situated every means was tried to gain over the besieged. Canute demanded that Edmund and his brother should be given up, that 15,000*l.* should be paid for the ransom of the Queen, 12,000*l.* for that of the bishops, and that 300 hostages should be given for the fidelity of the citizens. If these terms were accepted, he would take them under his protection; if they were refused, the city should be abandoned to pillage and the flames.<sup>2</sup> But the brave Londoners held out, and the Danes were forced to retire. The royal brothers had escaped in a boat through the Danish fleet. Several encounters followed, and also a second siege of the city, which was relieved by Edmund, who entered London in triumph. The war was, after a truce, terminated by a friendly compact. The two kings had agreed to meet each other in single combat in the isle of Olney, near Gloucester, where after a few blows the rival monarchs shook hands and agreed to divide the kingdom, Canute receiving from Edmund the northern half of England.<sup>3</sup>

On the death of Ethelred Queen Emma had recalled King Olaf to England to assist her against Canute, but on a peace concluded between Edmund and the Danish monarch, Olaf soon withdrew, and was created King of Norway by the voice of the people. Queen Emma also, who was stepmother of "Ironside," fled for the second time into Normandy, taking with her the young princes Alfred and Edward.<sup>4</sup>

The Danish chronicler says that the murder of Edmund took place about a month after his agreement with Canute, who thus became master of the remaining half of the island, and took care to render permanent a power he had obtained only by repeated efforts.

Olaf, after the battle of London Bridge, spent two summers and a winter in France, and after the death of King Edmund in 1016 came to

<sup>1</sup> Chronicles of London Bridge.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.

<sup>4</sup> Turner, Gaillard.



Rouen, where he met the sons of Ethelred, and entered into an engagement to assist them the following year in the recovery of their kingdom, for which he was to be rewarded with Northumberland if the enterprise was successful. This invasion was attempted, but was a failure, and the Princes were compelled to return to Rouen. There is no doubt that Emma not only sanctioned these efforts made by her sons to recover their rights, but also assisted them as far as was in her power.

Sigvat the Scald writes thus:—

“Now all the sons of Ethelred  
Were either fallen or had fled;  
Some slain by Canute, — some, they say,  
To save their lives had run away.”

Canute rightly deemed an alliance with their mother herself would most effectually silence the future claims of Ethelred's heirs. His own wife was just dead, and he determined to offer himself to the widow of Ethelred. As Emma was of Danish descent he supposed she would naturally prefer a Dane to an Anglo-Saxon for a husband, and he desired to secure the alliance of the Duke in his own favour, who had up to this time befriended the sons of his sister, the Queen of England. The young Princes having heard of the death of Edmund, and Canute's cruelty to their two young cousins, the sons of that King had resolved to remain at the court of Normandy; but Richard had fitted out a fleet in support of their claims. However, Canute despatched his embassy to the Norman Duke. Messengers, with right royal gifts and earnest supplications, proceeded to the Court of Richard, with instructions to demand Emma of her brother, and at the same time to offer one of Canute's own sisters, named Estrech, or Estritha,<sup>1</sup> to the Duke.<sup>2</sup>

It occasioned great wonder among many persons that Emma should agree to marry the mortal enemy of her first husband and of her young sons. Not long before, Canute himself had besieged London while Emma was within its walls, and now she accorded him her hand in marriage; yet not only did the Duke, her brother, consent, but took for his own wife the Lady Estritha. Some writers estimate Emma's conduct in this instance as very politic, for not only did she insure the succession to her own children, but effectually silenced the Danes. Had Emma been indifferent to the future welfare of her sons Alfred and Edward, she would have brought them over with her to England; but her anxiety for their safety caused her to prevent their leaving the Norman court; for she dreaded the jealousy of Canute, which had been excited by the vain endeavours of Duke Richard to place those princes on the throne of their ancestors; added to this, Edwy, brother of Edmund, had fallen a victim, and the young sons of Ironside had been sent to a foreign land.

By the agreement made with Canute, Emma did not take away her son's right, but removed it to a greater distance by interposing her own issue by Canute; so that after the death of the usurper Harold Harefoot, Hardicanute succeeded as rightful heir by virtue of Emma's agreement, and being established on the throne, ordained his brother Edward his suc-

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes written Ostrich.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard.

cessor. By Emma's policy the Danes were thus wholly excluded, and the English line restored, through a match beneficial both to herself and her family. In making this alliance she would appear to have acted as guardian of the young princes, and to have considered expediency with a view to the ultimate result. Such is the view taken in the work entitled "*Encomium Emmæ*," which was written by a monk contemporary with Emma, and as the title imports, in commendation of the Norman Princess.

The two marriages of Emma to Canute, and of Canute's sister, Estrith, to Duke Richard, were solemnized at the same time (in the month of July, 1018),<sup>1</sup> with vast magnificence. The two years of Emma's widowhood must have about expired when she became a second time a bride; for Edmund's reign had lasted eighteen months, and a few months had elapsed after the accession of Canute before the ceremony took place. According to Jumièges, Emma was married to Canute "*Christiano more*," in the Christian form, so that, prior to that marriage, he appears to have been a Pagan following the Danish rites. That this was really the case appears from Ordericus Vitalis, one of the most accurate and valuable of the Norman historians. We know that Emma was a Christian herself, and from Ordericus learn that "Canute was made a Christian, and married Emma to preserve peace." The ceremony seems to have taken place at London a few days after her arrival, and on the occasion the Danish King, fearing she would be carried away by the Saxon soldiery, presented to the whole army "her weight in gold and silver."<sup>2</sup> By this marriage Canute gained the alliance of Duke Richard, though for a short time only, for he did not long survive his union with Estritha, and at the death of this prince his duchy devolved on his eldest son, who died in another year, childless, and after him to Robert, his brother, a man of valour and abilities.

The English were pleased to find at court a sovereign to whom they were accustomed; they greatly loved Emma, and as the widow of Ethelred she had naturally a claim upon them. Harding writes:—

"Kyng Knowt reigned in Englād the anon,  
And wedded had Queen Eme of England,  
Ethelrede wife, which gate him loue anon  
In Englande of all the estates of the londe,  
Of cómons also that were both fre and bonde."

"Acting as mediatrix between Canute and the English nation, Emma counselled her husband to send back his fleet<sup>3</sup> and his stipendiary soldiers

<sup>1</sup> Turner, Gaillard, Higden, Fabian, Roger of Wendover.

<sup>2</sup> Jamièges.

<sup>3</sup> In dismissing the Danish army and navy by request of his Queen, the King reserved for his own use forty vessels only, the crew or Thingmanen of which were intended for his body-guard. Edgar the Peaceable is thought to have kept his foes at a distance by the display of a fleet of 3,600 vessels, which each summer he employed to sail round the provinces he ruled. Before Canute's time the Danes had open barques with twelve oars; they afterwards enlarged these so that they contained more than 100 men. Canute's ships were covered over with gold and silver. They had one mast, on the top of which was a gilt vane, exhibiting some bird, to show which way the wind blew. Sometimes a man, a fish, a dragon, or a lion ornamented the stern of the vessel.—William of Malmesbury.

to their own country.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly after distributing among them 82,000 pounds of silver, he dismissed them to their native land."<sup>2</sup> This was an important concession, and betokened how great was the influence the Queen had already obtained over the heart of Canute.

The King of Norway and Denmark from the earliest period kept a "herd" or "court." "The herdmen were paid men-at-arms," who mounted guard at stated hours, posted sentries round the King's quarters, and had patrols on horseback, night and day, at some distance, to bring notice of any hostile advance. They were of two classes, udal-born to land, and called thingmen, from their being privileged to sit in *Things* at home, and those of a commoner class, *not* udal-born to land, and therefore unqualified, such as ordinary seamen, soldiers, and followers, but yet not of the class called slaves in England. The victories of Canute and his father are chiefly ascribed "to the superiority of the hired bands of thingmen in their pay. The massacre of the Danes in 1002, by Ethelred, appears to have been of the regular bands of thingmen, who were quartered in the towns, and who were attacked while unarmed and attending a church festival. The herdmen appear not only to have been disciplined and paid troops, but to have been clothed uniformly. Red was always the national colour of the Northmen, and continues still in Denmark and England the distinctive colour of their military dress. It was so of the herdmen and people of distinction in Norway, as appears from several parts of the Sagas, in the eleventh century."<sup>3</sup>

The dresses of the Danish kings were grand and magnificent, though not much unlike those of the Saxons, embroidered and worked with broad gold trimming. They had either a cloak or a robe, also resembling the Saxons, sometimes buckled over the right shoulder, and hanging on the left, and sometimes buckling on the middle of the breast; the cloak hung over the left shoulder of the King, without being buckled on the right at all, by way of distinction. They wore shoes, and also a kind of buskin, the toe of which was turned somewhat downward.

As early as the time of Edgar, the Danes who had settled in England were great beaux, constantly combing their hair, of which they were very fond.<sup>4</sup>

Canute himself is described as "large in stature and very powerful, fair, and distinguished for his beauty; his nose was thin, prominent and aquiline; his hair was profuse, his eyes bright and fierce."<sup>5</sup> His many

<sup>1</sup> The presence of the Danish army was a constant source of uneasiness and animosity to the English; but gratitude as well as policy forbade Canute to dismiss it without a liberal donation.—Lingard.

<sup>2</sup> Roger of Wendover, Turner.

<sup>3</sup> Laing; Preliminary Dissertation to Snorro, Chron. of the Kings of Norway.

<sup>4</sup> "The Danish mercenaries in England combed their hair once a day, bathed once a week, and changed their clothes frequently. A young warrior, going to be beheaded, begged of his executioner that his hair might not be touched by a slave, or stained with his blood; and Harold, surnamed Harfager, or 'Fair Locks,' made a vow to his mistress to neglect his fine hair until he had completed the conquest of Norway to gain her love."—Lingard.

<sup>5</sup> Saga.

great and good qualities obtained for him various surnames, such as the Brave, the Great, the Rich, and the Pious.<sup>1</sup>

The Danish manners and customs had been common in England long before, so that a Danish court would not occasion much astonishment among the Anglo-Saxons. Among the Danes themselves some court ceremonies, unknown before, had been introduced by Olaf Kyrre, or "the Quiet." "For each guest at the royal table he appointed a torchbearer, to hold a candle. The butler stood in front of the King's table to fill the cups, which, we are told, before his time were of deer's horn. The court-marshal had a table opposite to the King's, for entertaining guests of inferior dignity. The drinking was either by measure or without measure; that is, in each horn or cup there was a perpendicular row of studs at equal distances, and each guest, when the cup or horn was passed to him, drank down to the stud or mark below. At night, and on particular occasions, the drinking was without measure, each taking what he pleased; and to be drunk at night appears to have been common even for the kings. Such cups, with studs, are still preserved in museums, and in families on the Borders."<sup>2</sup>

"The kings appear to have wanted no external ceremonial belonging to their dignity: they were addressed in forms, still preserved in the northern languages, of peculiar respect; their personal attendants were of the highest people, and were considered as holding places of great honour. Earl Magnus, the saint, was in his youth, one of those who carried in the dishes to the royal table; and torch-bearers, herdmen, and all who belonged to the court, were in great consideration; and it appears to have been held of importance and of great advantage to be enrolled among the king's herdmen."<sup>3</sup>

There were many sorts of amusements in the Dano-English court: chess and dice are named among the rest. Bishop Ethern coming to Canute the Great about midnight, upon urgent business, found the king and his courtiers engaged at play, some at dice and others at chess.<sup>4</sup> Back-

<sup>1</sup> Turner.

<sup>2</sup> Until a few years since, the manor of Pusey, in Berkshire, has belonged to a family of the same name, their ancestor having received it from that king by the medium of a HORN, which bears the following inscription:—

"Kynge Knowd geve Wylyyam Pewse  
Hys Horn to holde by the Londe."

This curious relic of antiquity is of a dark-brown tortoise-shell colour, mounted at each end with rings of silver, and a third round the middle, on which the inscription is written in characters of much later date than those of the time of Canute. The horn is of an ox or buffalo; two feet are fixed to the middle ring, and the stopper is shaped like a dog's head. The length of the horn is two feet and half an inch; its greatest circumference one foot. The person to whom the horn was originally given is said, by tradition, to have been an officer in Canute's army, who had informed his sovereign of an ambuscade formed by the Saxons to intercept him, and received the manor in reward for his intelligence. — Britton and Brayley.

This interesting heirloom was produced at the recent anniversary of Alfred's birth.

<sup>3</sup> Introductory Dissertation on Snorro, Laing.

<sup>4</sup> Turner.



gammon is reported to have been invented about this period in Wales, and derives its name from *bach* (little) and *cammon* (battle).

Canute patronised men of literary merit, being liberal to the clergy and the Scalds: of the latter class the names and verses of many have been preserved, who are quoted by Snorro. An amusing anecdote is on record of Thorarin, who had made a short poem on Canute, and went to recite it in his presence. On approaching the throne, he received a salute, and respectfully inquired if he might repeat what he had composed. The king was at table at the close of a repast; but a crowd of petitioners were occupying their sovereign's ear by a statement of their grievances. The impatient poet may have thought them unusually loquacious; he bore the tedious querulousness of injury with less patience than the King, and at last, presuming on his general favour with the great, exclaimed, 'Let me request again, Sire, that you would listen to my song; it will not consume much of your time, for it is very short.' The king, angry at the petulant urgency of the salutation, answered with a stern look, 'Are you not ashamed to do what none but yourself has dared, to write a *short* poem upon me! Unless by to-morrow's dinner you produce above thirty strophes, on the same subject, your head shall pay the penalty.' The poet retired, not with alarm, for his genius disdained that, but with some mortification at the public rebuke. He invoked the Scandinavian muses, his mind became fluent, verses crowded on it; and before the allotted time, he stood before the king with the exacted poem, and received fifty marks of pure silver as his reward."<sup>1</sup>

The beautiful manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxons have already been alluded to. Fosbrooke assigns two motives for the extraordinary pains taken in their illustrations: "one that perusal might be thus invited, the other that they might be presents of value. Ervenius, an Anglo-Saxon, was very skilful in writing and illumination. He committed two books, the Sacramental and the Psalter, in which he had decorated the principal letters with gold, to the care of Wulstan when a boy. Admiration of the workmanship invited Wulstan to a studious perusal. But Ervenius consulting the advantage of the age, as affirmed, with the hope of greater reward, presented the Sacramental to Canute, and the Psalter to Emma, his Queen."<sup>2</sup>

One of the royal residences<sup>3</sup> of Canute and Emma, was a house or palace in Westminster, which was burnt down in the reign of the Confessor,<sup>4</sup> but their principal abode was the palace, which at that time adjoined St. Paul's, and Canute endowed the office of its Dean with the plot of ground contiguous to the Cathedral, now called the Deanery, and also a valuable estate at Chadwell. The chronicler Knyghton relates that it was in the gardens of this city-palace, declining, with a gentle slope,

<sup>1</sup> Turner's Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>2</sup> British Monachism.

<sup>3</sup> Raby Castle, the seat of the Earl of Darlington, about a mile to the north of Stamdorp, is supposed to occupy the site of a former mansion of Canute, given by him to the Church of Stamdorp. It stands on an eminence, founded on a rock, and is surrounded with a parapet and embrasured wall, together with a deep fosse.—Hutchinson.

<sup>4</sup> Fenn's Letters.

towards the banks of the river, that the well-known incident occurred of the king's reproof to his impious and scarcely half-Christianized courtiers. But Milner considers this to be a mistake, and says that Rudborne, who quotes more ancient authors, places this scene near the ancient Southampton, now the port of Northam.<sup>1</sup> The identical spot where the transaction took place, is still pointed out at Bittern, in Northam harbour, by the tradition of the inhabitants; the legend though well-known, is here given. "King Canute having walked one day to the sea-shore, attended by a train of courtiers, some sycophants began to address him in the courtly language of adulation, exalted his dominion, and pronounced him the most powerful and most happy of human beings; nay, they even had the boldness to add:—'Sire! nothing can resist you, nothing is impossible to your greatness.'

"Canute, disgusted with this fulsome flattery, ordered a chair to be brought, which he placed on the beach at low water. He then seated himself and exclaimed,—'Sea, thou art mine! and these sands acknowledge my sovereignty. I charge thee, therefore, rise no farther, nor presume to wet the feet of thy master.' The waves, however, obeying no laws but those of the Almighty, pursued their course, and dashed against the King, upon which he rose from his chair, exclaiming, 'Let all the inhabitants of the earth know, that the power of man is vain and contemptible, and that He only is a monarch at whose nod the heavens, the earth, and the sea, are ever obedient.'"<sup>2</sup>

This reproof sufficiently disconcerted the parasites, but Canute embraced another and more solemn occasion to acknowledge his sincere submission to the Almighty God, his Lord and Sovereign: he deposited the golden crown which he had been accustomed to wear, in the church at Winchester, and never afterwards placed it on his own head.

There yet exist coins of this King,<sup>3</sup> which were struck at Dublin,

<sup>1</sup> Milner's Hist. of Winchester.

<sup>2</sup> Great and Good Deeds of the Danes.

<sup>3</sup> While this work is going through the press the newspapers of the day describe the finding by workmen of no less than one hundred and twenty coins of Canute and some of his predecessors, in a perfect state of preservation, at Wedmore, in Somersetshire. The labourers who found the earthen vessel in which they were contained, were digging for gravel in the churchyard.

"No king," says Gough, in his Catalogue, "ever coined in so many places as Canute." He mentions no less than thirty-seven.

A Danish medalist has observed that no coins of Canute are to be met with of any other than English mints; notwithstanding he reigned two years longer in his own country than over England, which he governed nineteen years. This observation seems to be confirmed by the discovery of some of this Prince's coins of English mintage, with others of our King Ethelred, in a barrow in Ireland, mentioned by Olaus Wormius. England might be his favourite residence, as he had made it so considerable an accession to his paternal territory by compact and succession; and he affected to court the good-will of his new subjects, by taking the title of "Rex Anglorum," and sinking his other title.

Keder has noted four varieties of this Prince's coins.

The first exhibits his bust in armour, with a helmet or diadem; in his left hand the sceptre surmounted by a lily. The cross is a quatrefoil, with pellets at the corners, or with another kind of cross laid upon it.

2. The bust has the diadem or sceptre, which on some is surmounted by four pellets in form of a cross. The cross issues from a circle in the centre.

probably in acknowledgment of his power by the Danish-settlers in that country. The portraits of Canute and Emma, were prefixed to a Saxon MS. register of Hyde Abbey, written during that monarch's reign. This antique and valuable document is now in the possession of Thomas Astell, Esq., by whose permission portraits alluded to were copied by Mr. Strutt for his work on Saxon Antiquities.<sup>1</sup>

Canute has been celebrated for his justice and equity, and doubtless his religious feelings, which prompted both, may be really attributed to the influence of Emma.

The following letter, written from Rome, attests the beneficial influence of awakened piety over the heart of the King. He wrote in these terms to some of the great men of his kingdom:—"Be it known to you that I have humbly made a vow to Almighty God, to conduct myself hereafter, as shall become me; to govern my kingdom as a religious and just monarch, and to distribute equal justice among my subjects. I have prepared to correct whatever errors I may have been led into by the impetuosity of youth or want of reflection. I therefore desire and command my counsellors, to whom the affairs of the kingdom are entrusted, on no pretence to be guilty in themselves, or suffer others to be guilty of any acts of injustice, either through fear of me, or with a view to favour any person high in power. The laws shall be equally distributed among my nobles and my commoners. Let him beware who either values my friendship or his own welfare."<sup>2</sup>

Canute and Emma are said to have, for several years, regularly attended together the Festival of the Purification. Emma was a great benefactress to the Saxon church, and the extraordinary liberality displayed by Canute towards the Abbeys of Winchester, Ramsey, and Ely, is to be ascribed to the interest Emma exerted in their favour; in especial Ramsey was beloved by the Queen, and received many splendid gifts from Canute on that account. The King and Queen, say the chroniclers, visited Croyland and Ely in person, and piously offered their regal donations. On Croyland, besides other and more valuable presents, the King bestowed "twelve beautiful white bears' skins, for the altars on festival days," and also a "vestment of silk embroidered with eagles of gold." These rich gifts were as rare as costly, for though the skin of the brown bear was then common in England, the white was scarce and uncommon.

Queen Emma's offering to the monks of Ely is worthy of remark, as showing how excellent the art of needlework was in her time, and how she excelled in embroidery, "and with her own hands wrought a beautiful

3. The bust in a quatrefoil, with a crown of fleurs-de-lis; the cross terminating in crescents, in a quatrefoil, with three pellets on the points.

4. The bust wearing a high pointed cap or helmet; the sceptre surmounted with three pellets. The cross in a circle, in the angles four rings enclosing a less.

A fifth sort has an arm to the bust.

A sixth has the bust helmeted in a quatrefoil. — [Catalogue of the Coins of Canute, by Richard Gough.]

<sup>1</sup> Plate 28. Strutt's Saxon Antiquities.

<sup>2</sup> Great and Good Deeds of the Danes.



altar-cloth," which she presented to the priests. This costly piece of ornamental industry is thus described:—"it was of a green colour, and beautified with plates of gold, that appeared raised: if viewed lengthways along the altar, it seemed of a blood-red colour, and it was finished at the corners with rich gold ornaments, which reached to the ground."<sup>1</sup> These gold ornaments were of a kind of gold thread and bullion-work termed "orfrays."

Canute liberally endowed St. Swithin's Abbey, Winchester: besides other rich jewels, the King bestowed on it a cross worth as much as the revenue of England amounted to in one year.<sup>2</sup> Roger, of Wendover, relates that "Canute decorated the Old Minster, Winchester, with such magnificence that the minds of strangers were confounded at the sight of the gold and silver and the splendour of the jewels. This too, was done at the instigation of Queen Emma, whose profuse liberality consumed whole treasuries on such objects." Upon the destruction of monasteries many of the costly presents of Canute and Emma to the church must have been rifled and cast into the melting-pot, for the mere value of the metals of which they were composed.

A pall is named, as presented by the King and Queen, probably of her work, to Glastonbury "of various colours woven with the figures of peacocks." This was on the occasion of the visit to the tomb of Edmund Ironside, whom Canute was accustomed to style "his brother." A rich cloth, embroidered with "apples of gold and pearls," was given at the same time the charter was granted to the Abbey of St. Edmundsbury, in signing which Emma writes "Ego Alfgifa Regina," and the King names her as "Myne Queen Elfgifa," who, he says, gave the church a revenue of "four thousand Eels, in Lakinghithe."<sup>3</sup>

It was on the occasion of Canute's visit to Ely, accompanied by Queen Emma and the nobles of the court, when they were gliding along the river in their barge, that the King himself composed that little Saxon ballad of which, unfortunately, one single stanza alone has been preserved. As the royal party approached the church the monks were at their devotions, and the sweetness of their melody was so attractive to the King, that he ordered his rowers to pause near the spot whence the sounds proceeded, and to move gently while he listened to the harmony of the voices which came floating from the summit of the high rock before him. So great was his delight that it broke forth in the following poem.

"Merie sungen the muneches binnen Ely,  
Tha Cnut ching reuther by:  
Roweth cnites noer the land,  
And here we thes muneches sæng.

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<sup>1</sup> Resembling a short silk (such as is frequently seen in early miniatures); Gale, vol. ii., p. 505.

<sup>2</sup> Howel.

<sup>3</sup> Fisheries were one of the sources of rent noticed in the Domesday Survey, where the produce in kind is mentioned, it seems chiefly to have consisted in eels, herrings, and salmons; sometimes they were paid by stitches or sticks, each stick having twenty-five. This was commonly the case in payment from mills. — Sir H. Ellis.



“Merry sang the monks in Ely  
When King Canute sailed by:  
Row, Knights, near the land,  
And let us hear the monks' song.”

Probably Canute sang these lines to some musical instrument, like the minstrels.<sup>1</sup> It is much to be regretted that the rest is lost. It has been thought that this poem is not so early as the time of Canute, and Lappenberg's learned editor, Dr. Thorpe, considers it no older than the thirteenth century. However this may be, as regards the language of the songs as handed down to us, there is no reason to doubt that the King might actually have composed such a poem, if indeed it did not proceed from the cultivated mind of Queen Emma herself, which is by no means impossible. When the barbarous deeds of the personages of those times are considered, it is a fact which creates extreme surprise that the ideas expressed in ballads and poems by the minstrels of that very period should be so full of delicacy and refined feeling. In the sagas there is an occasional gentleness and tenderness, where love and beauty are the themes, which contrast singularly with the records of burning, slaying, and outrages of all kinds perpetrated by the heroes. The charms of nature and the beauties of scenery appear to be fully appreciated by the “barbarians,” who, if they acted like savages in some respects, seem to have the less excuse, as their songs prove, that though they “pursued the wrong,” they knew “the right.”

The skill, so insisted on in all accounts of presents made to the church, both in the arts of needlework and in the chasing and carving of metals, cannot be denied them; and that they understood the degrees of perfection to which such arts might attain, is shown by their earliest traditions. For instance, the sacred histories of the Scandinavians relate the marvels wrought by Vulund the Forger, the Vulcan of the North. The Icelandic Saga thus describes his skill: “Vulund was so renowned throughout the north that by one consent all the smiths acknowledged him their superior. To denote the excellent property of any forged weapon it was usual to say the artist must have been a Vulund. A rivalry having ensued between him and King Nigundur's former smith, it was agreed that Vulund should forge a sword, and his rival a helm, which the latter was to put on, and if it were found proof against the sword, Vulund's head should be forfeited. Accordingly the King's former smith put on the helm, and sitting on a bench, bid Vulund, in defiance, use all his strength. The latter, who stood behind him, then raised his arm, and, at a single stroke clove the armour and armourer down to the girdle; and inquiring what he felt, was answered by the smith that he had an internal sensation, as if from a stream of cold

<sup>1</sup> The ancient musical instruments were the *viele*, the flute, the pipe, the harp, and the *rotæ*. This last, a species of harp, occurs in Chaucer and all our early poets. The *viele* was not the instrument now called by that name, but shaped like a fiddle, and played with a bow. The early music was written with square notes, ranged on four lines; the fifth was not introduced till late in the reign of St. Louis. — M. Le Grand's Notes to Fabliaux.

water. 'Shake thyself,' said Vaulund: the smith immediately did so, his body separated, and either half fell on opposite sides of the bench."<sup>1</sup>

Canute and Emma were great encouragers of church building; and to them may be attributed some of the most celebrated in England, as well as several in Normandy, which "time, war, flood, and fire" have spared to the present time, to prove the wondrous powers of architects and carvers in the early ages, never to be even approached in excellence by later and more enlightened artists.

In 1020, the Cathedral of Chartres, still one of the most magnificent in France, which had been destroyed by lightning, was rebuilt by its bishop, Fulbert. The names of Canute and Richard II., Duke of Normandy, are recorded as among those who assisted the work by their contributions. In the same year, the second of his marriage with Emma, Canute built the Monastery at Edmundsbury, "where the body of King Edmond lies, and by the advice of Queen Emma and the bishops and barons, established monks in it under Guy, a man, humble, modest, and pious."<sup>2</sup> The Abbey of St. Bennet's in the parish of Sudham, county of Norfolk,<sup>3</sup> was another foundation of Canute, between the years 1020 and 1030, as well as a church at Ashdone, in Essex, at the dedication of which all the English and Danish lords assisted.<sup>4</sup>

Emma had only two children by Canute; they were named Hardicanute and Gunilda, the former was surnamed "the Hardy or Robust," from his personal accomplishments;<sup>5</sup> the latter was reckoned one of the loveliest of her sex, and in her father's lifetime was contracted to the Emperor of Germany, whom she afterwards married.

Hardicanute, who by Emma's agreement, prior to her union with Canute, was destined to inherit the crown of England, was quite a child when the ceremony of translating the body of Bishop St. Elphege took place, of which the Saxon Chronicle gives the following account:—

"This year, 1023, King Canute within London, in St. Paul's minster, gave full leave to Archbishop Ethelnoth and Bishop Brithwine, and to all the servants of God who were with them, that they might take up from the tomb the Archbishop St. Elphege; and they then did so, on the sixth before the ides of June. And the illustrious King, and the archbishop and suffragan bishops, and earls, and very many clergy, and also laity, carried in a ship, his holy body over the Thames to Southwark, and there delivered the holy martyr to the archbishop and his companions; and they then with a worshipful hand and sprightly joy, bore him to Rochester. Then, on the third day, came Emma the lady, with her royal child Hardicanute; and then they all, with much state and bliss, and songs of praise, bore the holy archbishop into Canterbury; and then worshipfully brought him into Christ's Church, on the third before the ides of June. Again, after that, on the eighth day, the seventeenth before the kalends of July, Archbishop Ethelnoth, and Bishop Elfsy, and Bishop Brithwine, and all those who were with them, deposited St.

<sup>1</sup> Notes to Frithiof's Saga, translated by Oscar Baker.

<sup>2</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>4</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Seven miles from Norwich.

<sup>5</sup> Hume.

Elphege's holy body on the north side of Christ's altar, to the glory of God, and the honour of the holy archbishop, and to the eternal health of all who there daily seek his holy body with a devout heart and with all humility. God Almighty have mercy upon all Christian men, through St. Elphege's holy merits."<sup>1</sup>

Canute resided chiefly in England, yet he occasionally visited Denmark, attended by an English fleet. The year after his marriage with Queen Emma he went there, and in all probability was accompanied by his royal consort, A. D. 1019.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that Earl Ulf Sprakalegsson had been left protector of Denmark by Canute when he went to England, his son "Hardicanute" being in his hands. The summer after this arrangement had been made by the English King, the Earl gave it out that King Canute had at parting made known to him his will and desire, that the Danes should take his son Hardicanute as King over the Danish dominions. He said Canute had done this on it being represented to him that the nation suffered many disadvantages from the absence of its King. "Hitherto," said Earl Ulf, "we have been so fortunate as to live without disturbance, but now we hear that the King of Norway is going to attack us, to which is added the fear of the people, that the Swedish King will join him, and now King Canute is in England." The Earl then produced King Canute's letter and seal confirming all that he asserted. Many other chiefs supported this business, and in consequence of all these persuasions the people resolved to take Hardicanute as King, which was done at the same time.<sup>3</sup> This circumstance, passed over in our English histories, throws light on the proceedings of Queen Emma: the Danish historian proceeds to say, "that Queen Emma had been principal promoter of this determination, for she had got the letter to be written and provided with the seal, having cunningly got hold of the King's signet; but from him it was all concealed."

By this account it would seem, that Emma was intriguing to advance her son before his father's death, and had not shrunk from forgery to accomplish her end. The story, whether true or false, is thus continued:—

"When Hardicanute and Earl Ulf heard for certain that King Olaf was come from Norway with a large army, they went to Jutland, where the greatest strength of the Danish Kingdom lies, sent out message-tokens, and summoned to them a great force: but when they heard that the Swedish King was also come with his army, they thought they would not have strength enough to give battle to both, and therefore kept their army together in Jutland, and resolved to defend that country against the Kings. The whole of their ships they assembled together at Lynn-fiord, and waited there for King Canute."<sup>4</sup>

The Dano-English King, in the meantime, had sailed with a vast force from England, and arrived in safety at Denmark, where he went to

<sup>1</sup> Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Snorro's Kings of Norway.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.

<sup>4</sup> Snorro.



Lynnfiord, and there he found gathered besides, a large army of the men of the country.

When the Danes "heard that King Canute had come from the west to Lynnfiord, they sent men to him, and to Queen Emma, and begged her to find out if the King were angry or not, and to let them know. Your son Hardicanute will pay the full mulct the King may demand, if he has done anything which is thought to be against the King." He replies, "that Hardicanute has not done this of his own judgment, and, therefore," says he "it has turned out as might be expected, that when he, a child, and without understanding, wanted to be called King, the country when any evil came and an enemy appeared must be conquered by foreign princes, if our might had not come to his aid. If he will have any reconciliation with me, let him come to me and lay down the mock title of King he has given himself."

The Queen sent these very words to Hardicanute, and at the same time she begged him not to decline coming, for as she truly observed, he had no force to stand against his father. When this message came to Hardicanute, he asked the advice of the Earl and other chief people who were with him; but it was soon found that when the people heard King *Canute the Old* was arrived, they all streamed to him, and seemed to have no confidence but in him alone. Then Earl Ulf and his fellows saw that they had but two roads to take, either to go to the King and leave all to his mercy, or to fly the country. All pressed Hardicanute to go to his father, which advice he followed. When they met he fell at his father's feet, and laid his seal, which accompanied the kingly title, on his knee. King Canute took Hardicanute by the hand and placed him in as high a seat as he used to sit in before. Earl Ulf sent his son Swend, who was a sister's son of King Canute, and the same age as Hardicanute, to the King. He prayed for grace and reconciliation for the Earl his father, and offered himself as hostage for the Earl. King Canute ordered him to tell the Earl to assemble his men and ships and come to him, and then they would talk of reconciliation. The Earl did so."<sup>2</sup>

Canute's happiness was not unfrequently clouded. Besides the annoyance caused him by the rebellion in the name of Hardicanute, directed by Earl Ulf, he was obliged to make war on his wife's brother, Duke Richard, in consequence of his having repudiated Estritha his duchess, on a very trifling pretence.<sup>3</sup> To avenge the affront, Canute sailed at the head of a large

<sup>1</sup> Wolf or Ulf was brother-in-law to Canute, and Earl Godwin was married to Gyda, sister of Ulf. He was afterwards assassinated by Canute's orders, after the battle of Helge, 1025-7.

<sup>2</sup> Snorro's Kings of Norway.

<sup>3</sup> Duke Richard, the second, or, as Holinshed calls him, third of that name, brother of Queen Emma, married first Judith, sister of the Earl of Bretagne, by whom he had three sons, Richard, Robert, and William, and three daughters, of whom one died young; Alix, another, married Reignold, Earl of Burgoyne; a third, *Eleanor, to the Earl of Flanders*. After a ten years' union Judith died, and Duke Richard married Estrida, sister of Canute. He purchased a divorce from her, and then married a lady called Pavia, by whom he had two sons, William, Earl of Arques, and Mauger, Archbishop of Rouen. Duke Richard died in 1022, fifteen years before Canute, and was succeeded by Richard III., who reigned only



fleet to Normandy, and landed at Rouen; but scarcely had he arrived, when he learnt the sad tidings of the death of his favourite son Sweyn,<sup>1</sup> governor of Norway. Some accounts relate that Canute was so deeply affected by this event, that it brought on an ague of which he died at Rouen.<sup>2</sup>

The Saxon Chronicle differs in the statement of Canute's death, and declares that event to have taken place at Shaftesbury, in England, on the second day before the Ides of November, 1035, and that he was interred at Winchester, the epitaph on his tomb being—

“HERE LIES CANUTE, CELEBRATED FOR HIS PIETY.”

He was only forty years of age at the time of his death, and he had been eighteen years united to Queen Emma.

At the time of Canute's death, not one of the Queen's sons was in England; Hardicanute, on whom, by virtue of her marriage contract, and his father's dying wishes, the crown should have devolved, was in Denmark, where he had been crowned the preceding year, and made no haste to assert his claims in England. Harold Harefoot, the only surviving son of Canute's first marriage,<sup>3</sup> knowing how superior England was to the crown of Denmark, allotted to him by his father's will, hurried over to endeavour to secure it for himself. The Queen also, if she had not, as some say, returned with Canute prior to that monarch's death into England, lost no time in doing so; but before anything could be done in the behalf either of herself or her son, Harold had contrived to secure the kingdom for himself. The reason of this was that the cities north of the Thames durst not oppose the Danes, who ruled over them, and were forced to acknowledge him; but Wessex declared boldly for Hardicanute. This part of England was very populous, being a place of refuge for all those whom the Danish cruelty and oppression expelled from the more northern districts; it was chiefly inhabited by Saxons, who maintained their freedom,

one year, and then Robert became Duke A. D. 1023. After a vigorous reign of seven years, Robert departed on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, leaving the dukedom to his son William, afterwards the Conqueror, then seven years of age (A. D. 1030). Richard having been so long dead, the expedition made in 1035 must have been grounded on some other cause. Edward and Alfred were at the Norman court, and Robert before his departure had, by an embassy, requested Canute to give his cousins a share of England: but that being refused, Richard had prepared a fleet, intending to assert their claims by force of arms. That was, however, prevented by the ships being destroyed in a storm. Afterwards Canute promised Wessex to the sons of Emma; but the pilgrimage of Robert, and his own subsequent death, put off the execution of this promise, had it ever been intended to perform it.—Rapin and Holinshed, Roger of Wendover.

<sup>1</sup> Rapin says that Sweyn, brother of Harefoot, survived Hardicanute.

<sup>2</sup> Saxo-Grammaticus, Grafton, and Polydore.

<sup>3</sup> Harold is said to have been surnamed “Harefoot,” from having one foot covered with hair. Hume says, “from his agility in running and walking;” he was fond of hunting, and being averse to riding on horseback, pursued the amusement on foot.—Lingard.

“Harold would choose the time of prayer, when the people were going to church, to go out with his dogs.”—Thierry.

and were attached to the persons of their royal family.<sup>1</sup> Emma herself was a great favourite with the West Saxons, who determined to uphold the rights of her children.

Winchester was the capital of Wessex, and royal residence, and thither Emma repaired; the palace contained not only her own private property, but the royal treasures which Canute had entrusted to her keeping for his son Hardicanute.<sup>2</sup> But a powerful combination was speedily formed against the widowed Queen, who, at this moment, though the mother of three sons and of two daughters, seems to have been left to support her sorrow alone. While Emma fixed herself at Winchester, a witenagemote was hastily assembled at Oxford,<sup>3</sup> which was to bring much more grief to her than she had yet experienced. Leofric, Consul of Chester; Godwin, Earl of Kent; and others were present,<sup>4</sup> the object being to discuss the claims of the rival princes, Harold and Hardicanute. The nobles of Wessex supported Hardicanute, in spite of his absence,<sup>5</sup> and were seconded by Earl Godwin, who objected to Harold on account of the rumoured illegitimacy of his birth; but this appears to have been considered no objection in the eyes of his own countrymen, the Danes. Leofric, "the trusty friend of Canute," overruled his remonstrance, and the Londoners and other lords north of the Thames, favouring Harold's claim, appointed him ruler of the kingdom, "not only for himself, but for Hardicanute who was then in Denmark."<sup>6</sup> The treachery of Godwin mainly brought about this conclusion, he having on Harold's arrival secretly placed in his hands the will of the late King, which had been entrusted to his care, and covenanted to establish him on the throne, provided only that he would espouse his daughter Editha. This understanding not being generally known, Godwin, in the council, craftily appeared to support the cause of Hardicanute. Ambition was the ruling feature of Godwin's character, and while thus through his connivance the council was called, which gave a crown to the future husband of his daughter, it was arranged by the same meeting that Emma and Godwin should jointly rule over the dependant territory of Wessex, until the arrival of Hardicanute;<sup>7</sup> the Queen was to maintain her royal state in Winchester, having with her "the household of the King her son," and Godwin was to be general of her forces. The royal treasures and furniture at Winchester were to belong to Emma and her son;<sup>8</sup> but scarcely had Harold been crowned at Oxford, an office performed with his own hands,<sup>9</sup> then he hastened in

<sup>1</sup> Rapin.

<sup>2</sup> Simeon of Durham; Brompton.

<sup>3</sup> Oxford was often the seat of the English court; and Canute had held one great council there. The same city witnessed the murder of Sigeforth, husband of Alghitha, who became the Queen of Edmund Ironside: on the present occasion, the accession of Harold was settled there, and it was not only the spot on which that King was crowned, but the one in which he ended his short career.

<sup>4</sup> Grafton, Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>5</sup> Caradoc of Llancarvan.

<sup>6</sup> Ranulf Higden; Saxon Chronicle; Grafton.

<sup>7</sup> Lingard; Gaillard; Rapin.

<sup>8</sup> Milner.

<sup>9</sup> Egelnoth, who had been seventeen years Archbishop, refused to crown Harold, saying that Canute had enjoined him to set the crown upon none but the issue of Emma. Then laying the crown on the altar, he denounced an imprecation against any bishop that should venture to perform the ceremony.

person to Winchester, whither indeed his emissaries had already preceded him, and seized on all the most precious articles at the royal palace, even "before Emma could take possession of them." In spite, however, of this violent treatment, Emma remained at Winchester, "as long as she was able to do so." Finding that Godwin engrossed all the power in Wessex in his own hands, and that her children were effectually shut out from the government, the Queen affected indifference from motives of policy, and devoted her whole time to the occupation of visiting the churches, as though her thoughts had been entirely bestowed on a future state and the salvation of her soul. In this, much also of sincerity was combined; for Emma was naturally pious, and deeply mourned the loss of a beloved and affectionate husband.

The affection of Emma for the sons of Ethelred did not appear as great as that she felt for the heir of Canute. Hardicanute came not, however, to her wishes, to assert his rights and reinstate her in her royal authority. Conceiving that the King and Godwin, deceived by her affected neutrality, had no fear of her interposing in affairs of state, Emma at length determined to recall her two sons by Ethelred to England, expressing the natural desire of a mother to behold the Princes who had been some time separated from her; but, in reality, her aim in sending for them was to awaken the love and affection of the Saxons for the race of their ancient kings, should Hardicanute fail to arrive; and Godwin's penetration having discovered this, he artfully applauded her scheme, and even aided her in the execution of it, but only with the view of delivering the Princes to Harold. The King informed, through Godwin, of Emma's wish, consented that her sons should be sent for. Edward, indeed, had early in Harold's reign come over with a considerable fleet, but not finding any countenance from his mother, who desired Hardicanute to succeed to the throne, and was, therefore, averse to his claim at that time, and probably unable to assist him without danger to both, had contented himself with burning a few villages, and then went back to Normandy.

Harold, aware that the Queen naturally aimed at placing her sons on the throne, had striven by many devices to get them into his power, and on Emma's determination to invite them to England, wrote them the following letter in their mother's name:—

"Emma, in name only Queen, to her sons Alfred and Edward, imparts motherly salutation. While we severally bewail the death of our lord the King, most dear sons, and while daily ye are deprived more and more of the kingdom your inheritance, I admire what counsel ye take, knowing that your intermitted delay is a daily strengthening to the reign of your usurper, who incessantly goes about from town to city, gaining the chief nobles to his party either by gifts, prayers, or threats. But they had much rather one of you should reign over them, than be held under the power of him who now overrules them. I entreat, therefore, that one of you come to me speedily and privately, to receive from me wholesome counsel, and to know how the business which I intend shall be accomplished. By this messenger present, send back what you determine. Farewell, as dear both as mine own heart."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Encomium Emmæ.*



This letter, which, by what followed, might as well have been written by their mother, as it was what she wished, was delivered into the hands of the princes, together with presents really sent to them from Emma, and, as such, both were received with joy, and a glad message returned, appointing a time and place for the desired meeting.<sup>1</sup> That Godwin himself was the bearer of these tidings to Emma is not impossible, as some say he was employed as ambassador.<sup>2</sup> Fifty vessels of chosen men of Normandy and Flanders had accompanied the Saxon princes, one or both, who landed at Sandwich, and from thence proceeded to Canterbury. According to some authorities Emma, mistrusting Godwin, from some intelligence received by her sons on their arrival, permitted one only at a time to visit him, retaining the other with herself. Alfred, whether after having seen the Queen or not is uncertain, was about to pay a visit to Harold, when he was arrested by Earl Godwin. The Saxon Chronicle says, Godwin prevented Alfred going to his mother, "knowing it would be displeasing to King Harold." As Guildford was on the road to Winchester, it may be that Alfred had not yet seen Emma, and that he had but rested in his way to the court of Wessex, to partake of the sumptuous entertainment provided by the Earl. On this occasion it is said by some, that, in a private intercourse, Godwin offered the Prince the throne, with the hand of his daughter, which he refused.<sup>3</sup> The alternative was immediately had recourse to by the irritable noble, and the fate of Alfred was from that moment sealed. Guildford, the scene of the carousal of the Saxon and Norman lords on that eventful night, was a town belonging to Godwin. Alfred was under his protection, and he betrayed his trust. According to custom, the guests of the Earl drank deep, and, as the hour advanced, became overpowered with sleep. Then the work of death began, which the cowardly Harold had planned, and Godwin connived at as an ally. The attendants of Alfred were disarmed, and put to the sword; every tenth man only being spared. As for "the ill-fated Prince, who was every way worthy to be a king,"<sup>4</sup> the child of exile and misfortune, he found himself hurried away, first to the presence of Harold, in London, and afterwards to the Isle of Ely. The noble to whom the royal youth was consigned, aggravated his situation by every insult which could be offered. A sorry horse was provided, he was stripped of his royal attire, and his feet tied beneath the saddle, exposed to the mockery and derision of every ordinary beholder in the towns and villages through which he had to pass. Thus pitiable was the fate of the son of Emma, herself the Queen, and at the very moment ruling over some not inconsiderable portion of the land. A court was convened of persons suited to their office, at Ely, by whom Alfred was sentenced to lose his eyes; and the unfortunate youth, on whom this cruel decree was executed by force alone, expired after a few days of lingering torment, either from his suffering, or the hand of a secret assassin.<sup>5</sup>

Harold and Godwin stand charged to this day, in the face of posterity,

<sup>1</sup> Milton, Roger of Wendover.

<sup>2</sup> Milner, Grafton, Scott.

<sup>3</sup> Gaillard, Grafton, Milner.

<sup>4</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>5</sup> Lingard



with this inhuman murder.<sup>1</sup> Though the monk of St. Omer, who might be supposed well acquainted with the facts, represents the Earl as ignorant of Alfred's danger;<sup>2</sup> nevertheless, so convinced were his contemporaries in general of his guilt, that he was twice arraigned for the murder: four years after, in Hardicanute's reign, by the Archbishop of York, and after that by Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, when Edward the Confessor was on the throne. On both those occasions he was acquitted; but Edward himself never really believed him innocent, though Godwin died in the very moment of defending himself from the renewed charge. There is too much reason to think self-interest blinded both Godwin and Harold to the enormity of the crime: one common in those times, where might was for ever struggling with right. The Queen herself has been charged with consenting and aiding in the crime, by sending the letter, which brought her sons to England; but this, of course, was the intention of the senders; and, that she was perfectly innocent is plain by the consternation she exhibited when the fatal tidings reached her, and her adopting the instant precaution of sending her remaining son, Edward, who is thought to have been with her at the time, to her Norman relatives; a step attended with no trifling difficulty, and which gave great mortification to the King and Earl by disappointing them of one of their intended victims. It was, perhaps, this act which brought fresh wrath from Godwin on Emma; for the Earl next accused her of treason, and Harold had formerly not only despoiled her of all the royal treasures,<sup>3</sup> but now seized on her private goods and treasures, left for her own use by Canute, and banished her from the kingdom.

Emma's friends, indeed, desired that she should quit England at this juncture, but where should she seek an asylum? It might have been expected that she would have taken shelter among her own relatives in Normandy, whither she had sent her son, Prince Edward;<sup>4</sup> but Duke William, being very young, was, while a minor, under the government of others,<sup>5</sup> and the Queen feared to awaken Harold's jealousy of her Norman connections. Emma preferred the asylum offered her by her cousin Baldwin, Earl of Flanders, who, finding the invitation he had sent to her was accepted, received her with all the respect due to misfortune, and treated her with the greatest courtesy and kindness.<sup>6</sup> He not only gave her the castle of Bruges for her residence, but assigned her a handsome provision for her support during her abode in Flanders. There the Queen remained for three years, attended by the few faithful adherents who had

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<sup>1</sup> Turner.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard.

<sup>3</sup> Encomium Emmæ, Caradoc.

<sup>4</sup> Harding.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> A. D. 1037. The Saxon Chronicle says, "This year was Harold chosen King of all, and Hardicanute forsaken, because he staid too long in Denmark; and then they drove out his mother Elfgiva, the Queen, *without any kind of mercy, against the stormy winter*; and she came then to Bruges beyond sea; and Baldwin, the Earl there, well received her, and there kept her the while she had need." The Earl of Flanders was married to a princess of the ducal family of Normandy [Eleanor, Emma's niece: see p. 304 (note)]; but one of his daughters was wife of Tosti, son of Godwin, Emma's enemy, which makes his conduct only appear the more generous on this occasion towards Emma.

accompanied her in her exile. Emma informed the good Earl how hardly she had been treated by Harold, and how Alfred, her son, had been put to death, and Edward forced to fly from the kingdom.

“Wherefore therle to Kyng Hardknowt then wrote  
 All hir compleynt, and of his succour prayed  
 And he should help with all his might, God wote,  
 It were amended of that she was affrayed,  
 He came anone in warre full well arrayed  
 Into Flaundes, his mother for to please,  
 Hir for to socour and sette hir hert in ease.”<sup>1</sup>

A. D. 1039. After repeated messages from the Earl and Emma, and the lapse of two years from his father's death, Hardicanute, who was more “the Unready” than the sons of Ethelred, sailed for Flanders, and spent a year there with his mother, consulting as to their future plans.<sup>2</sup> Under the cover of this visit, the Danish King had assembled a fleet of sixty sail, and he was actually on the point of making a descent upon England, when the news of Harold Harefoot's death was forwarded to him,<sup>3</sup> on which he sailed for London, and was received with much triumph; his claim being at once acknowledged by the whole nation, 1040. He was shortly after crowned at London by Egelnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had so resolutely refused to crown another than Canute's son. The favour which Hardicanute received is attributed to the regard entertained by the people, especially those of Wessex, for his mother, Queen Emma.

Emma, to her great joy, recalled by her son, after a three years' exile, returned to England. Hardicanute received her with much honour, and placed the administration of the affairs of government in her hands and those of Godwin,—a singular coincidence by which the second time Emma found herself on close terms of alliance with her old enemy. Godwin had been one of the first to do homage to Hardicanute, but the King, doubtless, feared his professions of regard even more than the open enmity he had before experienced. Having first sent for his half-brother, Edward, from Normandy, the Prince, under sanction of Hardicanute, raised against the Earl a charge of having murdered Prince Alfred, and loudly demanded justice. Living, Bishop of Worcester, was likewise accused of participation in the crime. Elfric, Archbishop of York, was the person who was employed with Godwin, by the King, to disinter Harold Harefoot's body, for the gratification of his revenge for the murder. In this painful task the Earl and prelate disagreed, and Elfric accused Godwin. Godwin denied the charge against him, making out, on oath, that the part he had in the putting out the eyes of Alfred, he was constrained to by order of Harold. He, in fact, legally acquitted himself “by his own oath, and the oaths of a jury of his peers, the principal noblemen of England.” Whether innocent or not he was restored to favour, and shared with Emma in the administration of the kingdom. In all likelihood Hardicanute but carried out the wishes of his mother in this endeavour to bring Godwin to justice; if this was the case, and that

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chron.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard.

<sup>3</sup> Hume, Roger of Wendover, &c.

a churchman was his accuser seems to render it likely, it may account for the vindictive feelings Godwin afterwards exhibited against Emma, upon the accession of Edward to the throne.<sup>1</sup>

The policy of Godwin had led him, in the hope of inducing the King to forgiveness, to offer him a very sumptuous present. His peace-offering, which was accepted, was a galley, finely rigged and manned. As for Living, he was deprived of his bishopric, which was given to his accuser, Elfric, but purchased his pardon by a round sum of money, when he was reinstated.

Godwin's ship had a stern of gold, and eighty soldiers uniformly and richly suited: on their heads they all wore gilt burgonets, and on their bodies a triple gilt habergeon: swords with gilt hilts girded to their waists; a battle-axe, according to the Danish fashion, on their left shoulder; a target with gilt bosses borne in their left hand, a dart in the right hand, and their arms bound about with two bracelets of gold. The gift of Godwin is quite in accord with the manners of the day, and seems an adroit imitation of the celebrated ship of the Viking Frithiof, the swift-sailing Ellida, thus beautifully described in the Saga of Bishop Tegner:<sup>2</sup>

“The bark Ellida next was Frithiof's own  
 Viking, 'tis said, from war returning home,  
 Sail'd by the strand, and on a wreck he spied  
 A man, who seemed to revel with the tide,  
 Of noble stature, and of face serene,  
 Joyful and glad, though changeful was his mien:  
 Like the sea basking in the solar sheen:  
 A cloak of blue and belt of gold he wore,  
 Bedecked with corals from a distant shore.  
 White, as the foam on billows, was his beard,  
 And, as the ocean, green his hair appeared.  
 Then, thither, Viking steered his floating shell,  
 And saved the Being from the billow's swell.

But he, while smiling, to his saviour said:  
 ‘My bark is staunch, the breezes will not fail;  
 This very night a hundred miles I sail.  
 Long shall thy kindness in my mem'ry dwell,  
 And soon some gift my gratitude shall tell.

Yes, when to-morrow thou shalt wander o'er  
 Thy lands, some gift shall wait thee on the shore.’  
 Next day, when Viking wandered by the sea,  
 Lo! as an eagle rushes at its prey,  
 A stately Dragon swept into the bay.  
 The rudder moved, untouched by human hand,  
 And none, save spirits, steered that bark to land.  
 But mid the reefs and shoals it held its way,  
 And scatheless flew amidst the driving spray.

The gift was kingly; for each oaken beam  
 Was grown together without joint or seam.

<sup>1</sup> Lingard.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Oscar Baker.

High in the stem the Dragon's head arose,  
 His gilded jaws a fiery gape disclose ;  
 His breast was speckled o'er with blue and gold,  
 Whilst, in the stern, his tail in many a fold,  
 Bright as a mail of silver, upward flew,  
 Shining resplendent towards the heavens of blue :  
 When his jet pinions, edged with brilliant red,  
 High in the air, to catch the breeze were spread :  
 His speed outstripped the headlong raving wind,  
 And left the eagle in his flight behind.  
 When that brave bark was filled with steel-clad men,  
 It seemed a fortress floating on the main."

That Queen Emma was particularly attached to the city of Winchester,<sup>1</sup> is evident from her returning to dwell there after the death of Harold ; even during her temporary absence also, she had continued to bestow her royal presents on the Cathedral.<sup>2</sup> The Queen's name is joined to that of her son Hardicanute, in his charters to her favourite monasteries,<sup>3</sup> and however authors may differ in their accounts of the character of that King himself, they unite in praising the kindness which he showed to his mother Queen Emma ; in this he was at least much superior to his brother, the sainted and vaunted Edward.<sup>4</sup>

In another point, the character of Hardicanute also deserves admiration, that of fraternal affection. Edward, the son of Ethelred, was invited to his court, A. D. 1041, and not only came there without fear, but remained an honoured guest during this king's short reign.<sup>5</sup> Hardicanute also carried out the plan of his father, as regarded Gunilda, daughter of Emma, whom Canute contracted to the Emperor Henry. This lovely young Princess is designated as the King of England's "fairest sister," to distinguish her from her half-sister Goda, daughter of Ethelred, and sister of Prince Edward, who had been united first to Walter, Earl of Mantes, and afterwards to Eustace, Earl of Boulogne, of whom we shall have to speak hereafter. Gunilda was bestowed with much solemnity and magnificence on the Emperor. After some time, the young Empress was accused of infidelity to her husband, but was cleared by a judicial combat : a dwarf in her service named Mimicon, who had attended her from England, fought with the champion appointed by her accusers, who was named Rodingar, a man of gigantic frame : the dwarf obtaining the victory, the fair fame of his mistress was considered established. Gunilda, though vindicated by this happy event, could never be persuaded to live again with her husband. Forsaking the world, she assumed the holy veil of a nun, in which she ended her days,<sup>6</sup> five years only after the death of her father, King Canute. The Chronicle exclaims that she died "as the noble morning star sinks at early dawn."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Milner's History of Winchester.

<sup>2</sup> Howel.

<sup>3</sup> Roger of Wendover, Marianus, Higden.

<sup>4</sup> Personally, Hardicanute was mild, and of a generous nature. His table was spread at four different hours in the day for his guests. Perhaps to the conviviality of living acquired among the Danes, may be attributed his feeble health and constant attacks of illness.

<sup>5</sup> Roger of Wendover, Marianus, Higden.

<sup>6</sup> Ranulf, Higden.

<sup>7</sup> Norman Traditions, Malmesbury.



Hardicanute's death was very sudden, in 1042, in the midst of the festivities of a wedding dinner, the nuptials celebrated being those of a noble Dane called Tovi and Gyda, the daughter of Osgod Clapa. Some say the King was poisoned; but it is more generally thought his death was the result of intemperance, for "he died as he stood at his drink." The scene of this event was the royal palace or mansion of the Saxon Kings, which formerly stood in that part of the parish of Lambeth,<sup>1</sup> now known by the name of Kennington, and which constituted part of the dower or estate of the Princess Goda, daughter of Ethelred and Emma.

The death of Hardicanute was a great blow to Emma: and the Saxon Chronicle states that his mother, who tenderly loved him, "for his soul gave to the New Minster the head of St. Valentine the Martyr." The English hailed the event as a signal of deliverance from the Danish yoke, and the festival called "Hog's Tide," or "Hock Wednesday," was for centuries after kept by them in commemoration of the circumstance.

At the time of Hardicanute's death, Prince Edward was in Normandy, The Queen, Godwin, and Living, Bishop of Worcester, in the emergency, united their interest in his favour, and on this occasion were upheld by Leofrie, the powerful Earl of Chester:<sup>2</sup> by their combined exertions, Edward was recalled to assume the sovereignty, the English being persuaded easily to take this step, having never forgotten the fact that they had formerly sworn allegiance to him "while yet in his mother's womb."<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, Edward, after having given pledges that he would bring but few Normans with him,<sup>4</sup> came over to England, and ascended the throne, being consecrated on Easter Day, 1043, at Winchester, Queen Emma assisting at the ceremony.

Edward was thus restored to his rights, after having been excluded from them during a long succession of disappointments; for, twenty-five years before, Emma had, by her marriage contract with Canute, excluded the children of Ethelred, and since then Edward had dwelt at the court of his maternal relatives, a dependant and an exile.<sup>5</sup> The Queen had on

<sup>1</sup> MS. History of Lambeth Palace.

<sup>2</sup> Higden.

<sup>3</sup> Brit. Sancta.

<sup>4</sup> Higden.

<sup>5</sup> Edward testified much gratitude, on coming to the throne, to the Normans, who had befriended his adverse fortunes. He owed nothing, as he thought, to Godwin, his mother, or the Saxons; but surrounded his person with Norman favourites, while Emma still preserved a Saxon court at Winchester. Edward plainly showed his dislike to the Anglo-Saxon manners, and patronised foreign tastes. The Saxon nobles perceiving this, gave up their own fashions and imitated those of the French, together with their character and mode of writing, "speaking French in their halls, as though it were a more gentle tongue." The Normans, under Ethelred, Canute, and Edward, were in such favour, and enjoyed so much power at court, that their clerks, or clergy, obtained the best benefices in the land. Robert, "a jolly, ambitious priest," first got to be Bishop of London, and, at a later period, Archbishop of Canterbury, leaving for his successor, in that of London, a countryman named William. Ulfo, another Norman, was preferred to Lincoln, and others to different places, as the King, the benefactor of the church, pleased. These Norman clerks, on being promoted, mocked, abused, and despised the English; and the Saxon nobles were still more irritated to find them increasing so fast in royal favour, as to be called to the secret council of the King. The advancement of Robert, in particular, elated the French and irritated the Saxon nobles.—Ingulphus, Gale, Holinshed.

many occasions shown that her conduct towards him was guided by convenience rather than affection; but Edward, esteemed one of the most holy among those whose names have been recorded in the saintly calendar, was certainly not gifted with the Christian virtue of forgiveness of injuries, at least, as regarded his mother. Of his feelings towards Ethelred we know nothing, and, certainly, Edmund "Ironside," as an elder brother, had set a dangerous example; yet Edward the Confessor was still less filial in his behaviour towards his mother, Queen Emma. It was plain he could not forgive the past, and that although Emma, Godwin, and Living had united to place him on the throne when no other heir remained who had the power to dispute his claim, he remembered that in an earlier period when they might have upheld his right, it had been overlooked and permitted to sink into oblivion. He had no regard for any of them: from his mother he had been almost always separated, but to his murdered brother Alfred he was deeply attached, and, as he conceived both Emma and Godwin to have been implicated in his cruel death, an impression remained on his mind, never to be effaced.<sup>1</sup> It was not, however, at first that Edward testified the feelings which he harboured in his breast against his only remaining parent; for we find Emma's great spirit and enterprise had so far got the better of the king's naturally weak and indolent character, that she engrossed a large share of the administration. This awakened the jealousy of Godwin, her old enemy, though present ally, who was too ambitious to permit himself to be superseded. The Earl had stipulated as one of the conditions for Edward's being placed on the throne, that he should espouse his daughter Editha, which he hoped would be a new source of influence. Edward, on many pretences, delayed the performance of this engagement; and it is not impossible the Earl suspected Emma of intriguing against him in this matter, more especially as he knew the aversion Edward himself secretly entertained to a union with the daughter of one whom he suspected of his brother's murder.<sup>2</sup> Godwin determined to remove any such obstacle to his own ambition, and hoping to ruin Emma in the king's favour, accused her of several crimes. In this he was seconded by a person scarcely less powerful or ambitious than himself, Robert, Bishop of London,<sup>3</sup> the king's spiritual adviser, a prelate of Norman birth, and formerly monk of Jumièges, but whose fortunes had been advanced with those of his royal master. This priest, who warmly seconded Godwin in his charges against Emma, made the following accusations jointly with the Earl:—

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<sup>1</sup> Biog. Brit., Higden.

<sup>2</sup> Whether Emma interfered in the matter of Edward's marriage is doubtful, for it took place in 1044, and in the year after that, the Queen-mother was present at the council when the first charter was granted for the monastery of St. Peter's, Westminster, 1045. Godwin and his sons, after the marriage of Editha, continued to contest for power with the Normans "in the very palace of which his daughter and their sister was lady and mistress;" and the insults they offered, "in turning their exotic modes into derision;" and blaming the King for his weakness in placing his confidence in them, were remembered and resented afterwards, when the favourable opportunity presented itself.

<sup>3</sup> Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

First, that the Queen had consented to the death of her son Alfred : secondly, that she endeavored to prevent Edward's succession to the crown : thirdly, that she kept up an impure intercourse with Alwyn, Bishop of Winchester,<sup>1</sup> her relative, who had been her protector on her leaving Normandy, at the period of her union with Ethelred, having at that time been retained in the royal household, and created Earl of Southampton. On more than one occasion he had aided Ethelred against the Danes, and even opposed Canute the future sovereign. On the peace being made between Edmund Ironside and Canute, Alwyn ceased to oppose the Danes, and following his inclination for a life of retirement and devotion, assumed the monastic cowl of St. Benedict, in the monastery of St. Swithin, Winchester. In honour of his rank Bishop Ethelwold himself invested him with his holy garb, and soon after, Alwyn was appointed to the monastic office of sacristan. From the time of Emma's second marriage he became the firm friend of Canute, a friendship reciprocated by the monarch. As a monk, Alwyn could not receive presents for his own personal use ; therefore, the only means of offering a compliment to him was, by a donation to the church of which he had the care. Many marks of favour were shown to Alwyn by Canute and Emma, who bestowed those rich gifts already described on Winchester Cathedral. In the nineteenth year of Alwyn's profession, A. D. 1032, the see of Winchester becoming vacant, he was promoted to it by Canute, at the Queen's especial request, which fact marks the unity of sentiment existing between the royal pair : this was retained by Alwyn through the reigns of Harold, Hardicanute, and Edward the Confessor.<sup>2</sup> It was the frequent visits of Emma to Alwyn which afforded one pretext of accusation against her. Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, is said to have hated, with no common hatred, the Bishop of Winchester, and united with Godwin in machinations against him and the Queen. Edward, unfortunately, was but too easily imposed upon, and too many unfavourable circumstances had already transpired to warp his mind against his mother. Instigated by these bad advisers, Edward called a council at Gloucester. After this he proceeded to Winchester, accompanied by Godwin, Leofric and Siward, three nobles, who are said to have possessed so much individual power, that the King's safety consisted principally in their disunion, for, if united, they might easily have dethroned him. On arriving at the royal city where Emma dwelt, they seized her treasures, and swept away the cattle and corn from the lands which she possessed as her dower, "a sort of military execution," as the historian calls it ;<sup>3</sup> while the unhappy Queen herself was committed to prison. The King's visit was so unexpected, and this treatment so unlooked for, that Emma was unable to secure the smallest part of her most private property ; so that all her jewels, gold, silver, and other valuables were taken with the rest.<sup>4</sup> There was an order given that she should be supplied with every necessary, yet only a mean pension was left for her subsistence, and not the least respect shown towards her. It is said that in this season she was reduced to the greatest necessity and ex-

<sup>1</sup> Polydore Vergil, &c.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.

<sup>2</sup> Milner's History of Winchester.

<sup>4</sup> Roger of Wendover.



posed even to the risk of dying of famine.<sup>1</sup> After this the Queen was obliged to retire to the neighbouring Abbey of Wherwell, until the crimes alleged against her were properly investigated. Edward's own charge against Emma was that "she had accumulated money by every method, regardless of the poor, to whom she would give nothing; therefore it was taken away, that it might aid the poor and replenish the King's exchequer." Malmesbury adds to this that Edward took his mother's estates from her "because she had for a long time mocked at the needy state of her son: nor did she ever assist him: transferring her hatred from the father to the child; for she loved Canute, both living and dead, *better than her first husband*." Here was an allusion to the differences which had, at one time, existed between Emma and Ethelred, and it is easy to perceive with what jealous feelings Canute's children had been ever regarded by their disinherited elder brother.<sup>2</sup>

That Edward considered one of the three charges, made by her enemies, which respected himself, to be correct, is obvious<sup>3</sup> by his own conduct, and the excuses alleged for it: severe as it was in the case of a son to a parent, the sanction of his council made it appear not to be without cause. Accordingly, Emma was kept in close confinement in the Abbey of Wherwell, though some say both the Queen and Alwyn were placed in ward in Winchester. The Bishop was committed to the examination and correction of the clergy. Emma is said to have sorrowed more for the defamation of Alwyn, than her own state of degradation.

Soon after Emma's disgrace, "Stigand was deposed from his Bishopric, and all that he possessed was seized into the King's hands, *because he was nearest to his Mother's counsel, and she went just as he advised her, as people thought*."<sup>4</sup> Stigand was a Prelate noted for covetousness; he had been Canute's Chaplain, and, as such was patronized and regarded with esteem by Emma, who seems to have delighted to reverence those whom Canute had loved. It was the Normans who prevented Edward's coffers from overflowing, and they not only detested Canute and all he had favoured, but disliked his widow for her half-Danish descent, and were glad of Godwin's accusation against Emma respecting Alfred's murder, though the Earl's chief object was evidently to throw off the odium of that crime from himself.

<sup>1</sup> Bethune.

<sup>2</sup> The reason why King Edward and the English so little respected "this great lady, whose many years had made her an actor of divers fortunes, was her never having affected King Ethelred nor the children she had by him, and for her marriage with Canute, the great enemy and subduer of the kingdom, whom she ever much more loved living, and commended dead."—Daniel's Coll. of the History of England, London, 1626.

<sup>3</sup> "Edward himself, in two of his charters, attributes the death of his brother to Harold and (which is more singular) to Hardicanute. Now, Hardicanute was in Denmark, and the accusation, if it mean anything, must allude to those who governed in the name of Hardicanute, and, in that hypothesis, may reach Emma or Godwin, or both, Yet, would Harold, who was then all powerful, have subscribed to these charters, if they had cast so foul a stain on the memory of his father?"—Lingard.

<sup>4</sup> Saxon Chronicle, anno 1043.



Far from being overcome by the sudden reverse in her fortune, and the serious accusations made by her enemies, Emma demanded justice, and wrote from her prison, at Wherwell, to different Archbishops and Prelates, asserting her innocence, and desiring to be put to the proof, professing herself willing to encounter any trial, even that of the fiery ordeal.<sup>1</sup> A Synod was accordingly convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury to examine into the charges against Queen Emma; on this occasion, the Bishops interceded in her behalf with the King, when Robert, the Archbishop, addressed them in the following terms, more forcible than delicate: "My brethren Bishops, how dare ye defend her, that is a *vile beast* and *not a woman*; who hath defamed her own son, the King; and called her leman, the Bishop, Christ her God. But, be it so, that the woman would purge the Priest, who shall then purge the woman, that is accused to consent to the death of her son, Alfred, and procured venom to the empoisoning of her son Edward?"<sup>2</sup> But, how so it be, that she be guilty or guiltless, if she will go barefooted for herself over four ploughshares, and for the Bishop over five ploughshares, burning and fire-hot, then, if she escape harmless, he shall be assoiled of this challenge, and she also." This savage proposal was accordingly agreed to, and the day straightway appointed for Emma's purgation.

In those days, if a person was accused or suspected of crime, which could not be fully proved, he was put to his ordeal or trial, either by fire or water. The ordeal by fire was chiefly used for persons of rank. There were several kinds: the one which Emma underwent was, as follows:—Nine red-hot ploughshares were brought forth, and laid at unequal distances, and then the accused person having bare feet and eyes close blinded had to walk over them. If this was performed without touching the shares, the accused was instantly declared innocent; if not, GUILTY.

A woman might avoid being put to this proof, if she could find a champion to combat in her favour. Gunilda appointed her dwarf when accused. Few could fail to find a protector, when their honour was thus questioned; but Emma's was a rare case, and she herself seems to have felt so confident in her innocence, as to challenge being put to the most extreme proof in her own person.

Emma passed the night previous to her fiery trial in the Cathedral Church, where, at the tomb of St. Swithin, she remained in fervent prayer; she implored the aid of the Saint, and falling asleep was comforted by a dream, or vision, in which that Holy Prelate appeared to her, saying, "Be thou firm, daughter, I am Swithin, whom thou hast enriched; fear not, when thou passest through the fire, it shall not hurt thee, for thy son hath done evil in this." Emma arose refreshed and comforted, and all the preparations being completed, was led into the Church, and thus addressed the King:—"O Lord and Son, I, that Emma, who bore and brought thee forth, and Alfred my son, I invoke God to bear witness in my person this day, may I perish, if what has been charged against me,

<sup>1</sup> Polydore Vergil, Fabian, Grafton, Stowe, Milner, Boyle.

<sup>2</sup> This is a new charge, of having attempted the life of Edward himself, and Brompton also names it as such.

ever even entered my mind." The King, the Bishops, and an immense multitude of persons of all descriptions were assembled in the Cathedral to be spectators of the event. The pavement of the nave having been swept, nine ploughshares, red with heat, were placed in a line upon it; "and now Emma," say the Chroniclers, "having again invoked the Almighty to deal with her accordingly, as she is innocent, or guilty, of the crimes laid to her charge, prepares herself for the trial, by laying aside her robes, and baring her feet. She is then conducted by two Bishops, one having hold of each of her hands, to the glowing metal. In the meantime, the vaults of the Church thunder with the voices of the assembled multitude, who, in loud shouts, call upon the Almighty to save the royal sufferer, and their cries are echoed through the whole city, by the crowds who were unable to gain admittance into the Church. She, herself, raising up her eyes to Heaven, and slowly walking on, thus makes her prayer:—'O God, who didst save Susannah from the malice of the wicked elders, and the three children from the furnace of fire, save me for the sake of thy holy servant Swithin, from the fire prepared for me.' In a word, she is seen to tread upon each of the burning irons, and is not even sensible that she had touched them, but addressing herself to the Bishops, 'when shall I come to the ploughshares?' They turn round and show her that she has already passed them. The lamentations of the multitude then ceasing, the air resounds with acclamations of joy and thanksgiving, still louder than their former prayers had been. The King alone is found overwhelmed with grief and bathed in tears, lying upon the ground beside his chair, to whom Emma being conducted, he begs her forgiveness, in terms of the utmost humility and sorrow, for the injurious suspicions he had entertained concerning her, and the rigour with which he had treated her. Not content with this, he requires of her, and the Bishops then present, to strike him with a wand, which he presents to them. She accordingly gave her son three blows; when having embraced him, both she and Bishop Alwyn were put into full possession of their former rights and property, and ever after enjoyed the royal favor and respect, in the degree they merited."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Circumstantial as this strange narrative is, modern authors have endeavoured to refute the story altogether, stating that Emma's accuser, Robert, to blacken whose character it was invented, did not become Archbishop of Canterbury till 1050; others have pronounced it an invention of later times, resting on suspicious evidence, because the historians nearest the time do not name the circumstance. The "*Encomium Emmæ*," written by a monk of Emma's own times, would have been in this matter a valuable authority; but his record unluckily leaves off at the accession of Hardicanute. The Saxon Chronicle, regarding Emma as a private individual, neglects to name the fact, and the Latin historians are silent on a tale prejudicial to Edward. Brompton, Knyghton, Rudborne, and Harpsfield, relate the circumstance; and Robert of Gloucester, regarding it as a well-known fact, gives it a place with much minuteness in his Chronicle. Ranulf Higden, also a most accurate historian, related it at length in his *Polychronicon*, in the middle of the fourteenth century. In 1338, nearly the same date, it was sung amongst other popular songs relating to the history of Winchester, in the Prior's Hall there, at the translation of Orleton to that see. Everything considered, the annals of the church where the event occurred were most likely to contain the record, as in this instance was the case; and though Malmesbury does not mention the

The ploughshares over which Queen Emma had walked were, in memory of her extraordinary deliverance, buried in the west cloister of the Cathedral of Winchester.

The Queen and Alwyn, in gratitude for their acquittal of crime, each made a donation to the same church. Emma bestowed on it nine manors in her own behalf.

Alwyn likewise bestowed nine manors for himself.

King Edward made a donation to Winchester Cathedral at the same time, consisting of three manors.<sup>1</sup>

Emma, more fortunate even than her daughter Gunilda, thus triumphed completely over her enemies. But where was Robert the Archbishop, her accuser, when Emma returned thanks to God for her deliverance? The Archbishop "was absent," it is said, "from pity, or some other reason,"—most probably from shame for the defeat of his conspiracy against Emma, and mortification at the triumphant position she would obtain by her acquittal.<sup>2</sup>

Emma was, soon after this great event in her life, witness to the quarrels which ensued between the powerful personages who had been so violent in their enmity to her. Earl Godwin and Robert, the Norman archbishop, embroiled the country in their furious contentions; and the banishment of the first was followed by the expulsion of the second: on which Godwin, more than ever potent, returned to revenge his injuries, after a brief banishment.

During these occurrences, the Queen seems to have preferred a safe retirement, in the possession of her wealth, to again entering the lists with the view of obtaining a mastery for which so many ambitious spirits were contending.

The indignity of her trial seems to have weighed heavily on her mind, and she buried her grief in the retreat of the cloister of St. Mary of Winchester, where, in March, 1052, the year after her triumph,<sup>3</sup> she died. Her death is thus mentioned in the Saxon Chronicle: "This year, in the second day before the nones of March, died the aged lady, Elfgiva Emma, the mother of King Edward and King Hardicanute, the relict of King Etheldred and of King Canut; and her body lies at Winchester, in the Old Minster, with King Canut."

Emma was, most probably by her own request, buried beside her Danish husband; in this particular King Edward testifying a respect he had failed to show to his mother when living; thus the church that witnessed her trial, contained her remains. Her son Hardicanute also rested in Winchester Cathedral, by the side of his parents. The tomb of Emma

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trial, he states that Emma was deprived of her lands by the King. The documents in Winchester Cathedral, moreover, prove that the Queen had given several manors to that Church, which certainly she could not have done if they were not in her possession.—Milner.

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale.

<sup>2</sup> Bale says, "I do not find what became of the accusers of Queen Emma."—Historical Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.



bore an inscription in rude Latin lines, setting forth that the Queen who reposed there was wife to two, and mother to two English monarchs.<sup>1</sup>

Emma was great-aunt to William the Conqueror, that King being second cousin to her two sons, Edward the Confessor and Hardicanute; and, as such, entitled far more justly to the English crown than Harold, the son of Godwin, who built his claim on his own power, and being brother of the Confessor's childless queen, the fair and harshly-treated Edith!<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Echard.

<sup>2</sup> At the disastrous siege of Winchester, during the reign of Stephen, the tomb of Queen Emma was destroyed, together with the "Abbey of St. Mary, twenty churches, the royal palace, lately erected in that quarter, the monastery of St. Grimbald, the suburbs of Hyde, and, in fact, nearly all the northern part of the city. The remains of the Queen were, however, preserved, and still rest within the walls of the Abbey, to which she was so great a benefactress. The screen which divides the sanctuary from the side aisles, Bishop Fox erected in 1525, and "on the top of the partition walls, and under the centre of each arch above are six mortuary chests, of carved wood, painted and gilt, and surmounted with crowns. These chests contain the remains of Saxon kings, prelates, and other distinguished personages interred in the cathedral, and are the work of Bishop Fox, who collected the bones from ancient lead coffins, which are supposed to have stood formerly in a similar situation.

The first chest from the altar-screen contains the bones of King Edred, and the second those of Edmund, son of Alfred; the third contains the mingled bones of King Canute, of Queen Emma, of King William Rufus, and of Bishops Wina and Alwyn. This chest has two inscriptions in Latin to this effect. On one side is the following:—

"In this, and in the other chest opposite, are the remaining bones of Canute and Rufus, Kings; of Emma, Queen; and of Wina and Alwin, Bishops."

And on the other side of this chest is the inscription:—

"In this chest, in the year of our Lord, 1661, were promiscuously laid together the bones of princes and prelates, which had been scattered about, with sacrilegious barbarity, in the year of our Lord, 1642."

So that nineteen years from the second spoliation of Emma's resting-place had passed away before the last mortal relics of the former fair "Pearl of Normandy" were restored to a consecrated and fitting position. The parliamentary soldiers, by whom the outrage had been committed of ravaging the cathedral in 1642, committed terrible depredations. "They broke in pieces the carved work of the choir, containing the story of the Old and New Testament, which was admirably executed. They totally destroyed the ancient organ; seized the rich tapestry, cushions, and vestments, in the choir, with the vessels of the altar; threw down the communion-table, and carrying off the rails which encompassed it, they burnt them in their quarters. They found a great number of Popish books, pictures, and crucifixes, in the prebendal houses, which, after a mock procession, were burnt, together with the organ-pipes, in the street. They defaced many of the monuments by tearing off their ancient brass inscriptions and other ornaments. They pulled down the mortuary chests containing the remains of Saxon kings, prelates, and other distinguished personages, and threw the bones at the stained glass, which they destroyed throughout the church, with the exception of that at the eastern window which had previously been taken out."

The first and second chests on the south side contain, as before-noticed, the bones of Kings Edred and Edmund. The former, who was the youngest son of Edward the Elder, was interred in the cathedral by direction of his friend St. Dunstan, and the chest has an inscription in Latin, thus rendered:—



The struggles and vicissitudes of Queen Emma were many; and her character is one, which cannot be contemplated without exciting reflection.

“King Edred died 955. In this tomb rests pious King Edred, who nobly governed this country of the Britons.”

Edmund, eldest son of Alfred the Great, who was crowned and died during his father's life, was buried in the second chest. The Latin inscription runs thus in English:—

“King Edmund died A. D. . . . Edmund, whom this chest contains, and who swayed the regal sceptre while his father was living, do thou, O Christ, receive.”

The third chest, on the south side, appropriated to Queen Emma, has been described already more particularly; and the first chest from the pulpit, on the north side, with its inscriptions, bones, &c., is similar to it. The second chest on the north side contains the remains of Kenewalch, who, with his father Kinegils, rebuilt the cathedral; and those of Egbert, founder of our English monarchy. One side has a Latin inscription, translated thus: “King Kenulph died A. D. 714.” And the other side has this inscription: “King Egbert died A. D. 837. Here King Egbert rests, with King Kenulph. Each of them bestowed upon us munificent gifts.”

The third chest, containing the remains of Kinegils, father of Kenewalch, the first Christian King of Wessex, and of St. Ethelwolf, father of Alfred the Great is thus inscribed:—“King Kinegils died A. D. 641;” and on the other side, “King Adulphus died 857.” In this chest lie together the bones of Kinegils and Adulphus. The first was the founder, the latter the benefactor, of this church.”

The contents of these mortuary chests were examined a few years ago by Henry Howard, Esq., of Corby Castle, and other talented and learned gentlemen, from whose account the following was written by the late Dr. Milner, to whom the particulars of that investigation were forwarded;—

“The first chest from the altar-screen, on the south side, inscribed Edred, contains many thigh bones and two skulls. The second chest, inscribed Edmund, contains five skulls, and three or four thigh-bones. One of the skulls, appears to have belonged to a very old man; another, also, belonged to a very old person. These, therefore, might have belonged to Wina and Alwin. The third chest on the south side, and the first chest from the pulpit, on the north side, bear the names of Canute, Rufus, Emma, Wina, Alwin, and Stigand. Neither of these contains any skulls; but they are full of thigh and leg bones; one set of which, in the third chest, is much smaller and weaker than the rest. This, with the supernumerary skull in the chest inscribed Egbert and Kenulph, might possibly have belonged to Queen Emma. The chest just referred to is the second from the pulpit, and contains three skulls, one of which is very small. One thigh-bone, wanting a fellow, is very stout, and measures nearly twenty inches long. But the two leg-bones, one of which is rather deformed, and the two hip-bones belonging to this body, are in the chest, and answer exactly. There are also two other thigh-bones and two leg-bones that pair; so that, with the exception of the third skull, these may be the bones of the aforesaid kings. The third chest from the pulpit, inscribed Kinegils and Adulphus, contains two skulls and two sets of thigh and leg-bones. From a measurement of the skulls and thighs, it appeared that they were about the ordinary size. It should be observed that the skulls actually at present in the chests are twelve in number, which is also the number of the names inscribed on the same chests.

“On the fine screen at the back of the caputular chapel in Winchester Cathedral, and opposite to the Chapel of the Virgin, is seen a range of canopied niches, in which formerly stood statues of the most eminent Saxon kings, from Kinegils to St. Edward, together with Canute, Hardicanute, Queen Emma, and, with them, Christ and the Virgin Mary.”

Thus, huddled together, were the bones of friends and enemies, as if to show

tion. By turns triumphant and persecuted, she offers a remarkable instance of perseverance, courage, and ambition. Of human failing she had her share: her virtues were obscured by her too great desire of power, and she sacrificed much to obtain the end to which all her aspirations were directed. The most pleasing feature in her disposition is, her attachment to her husband Canute; with whose interests she identified herself, and for whose son she exerted all the energies of her powerful and active mind. She was less just to her children by her first marriage, but the circumstances of the time are a strong excuse for her conduct to them, as, of course, the suspicion of her causing the death of one must be at once dismissed.

That Emma was amongst the most remarkable personages of her period will be allowed by all, and her influence on the country over which she reigned, renders her biography one of the most interesting of any of the British Queens. The name of Queen Emma has been kept alive by tradition, and has more than once "adorned a tale."

As late as the year 1338, when Adam de Orleton, Bishop of Winchester, visited his cathedral priory of St. Swithin, in that city, a minstrel, named Herbert, was introduced, who sung the song of Colbrond, a Danish giant, and the tale of "Queen Emma delivered from the Ploughshares," in the hall of the Prior, Alexander de Herriard.<sup>1</sup>

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how useless and how full of folly are human contentions, which all have the same close, and, after a few years, are a mere matter of transient wonder and curiosity.

<sup>1</sup> Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. i., p. 81.

## EDITHA "THE GOOD."

"Rose among thorns"—Earl Godwin's romantic and eventful story—The Jarl Ulf in the forest—The peasant-boy—King Canute's new soldier—His advancement—Marries Githa; made Earl—Thora and the slave trade—Bristol the mart—Godwin's connexion with royalty—Editha's beauty and meekness—The compact of Earl Godwin—Delays of King Edward—His dislike to the match with Editha—Their marriage—Edward's coldness—Dress and manners of the time—Splendour of priests—Wulstan's reproof—Long hair—Editha's humility—Her coronation—King Edward's vows—Unkindness to his Queen—The Queen's spiritual friends—Westminster Abbey founded—Editha's pious donations—Leofrina's will—Curious stone picture on the screen at Westminster Abbey—Quarrel of Tostig and Harold, when boys, represented—Installation of Leofric, Bishop of Exeter—Famine—Edward remits the tax of Danegelt—Rupture with Earl Godwin—Flight of Godwin and his family to Flanders—His banishment—Triumph of the Normans—Imprisonment of Queen Editha—Bishop Robert's accusation—A year of seclusion at Wherwell—Weakness of Edward—Godwin's triumphal return—Restoration of his party—The Queen returns to Court—Her triumph—Earl Godwin's sudden death—Edward sends for the son of Edmund Ironside—His arrival and death—Editha accused of cruelty—Royal chaplains—Dedication of Waltham Abbey—Bore-stall—Havering Bower—The pilgrim and the ring—Dedication of St. Peter's, Westminster—The King's death—Harold succeeds—Battle of Hastings—William the Conqueror—Editha's epitaph.

AMIDST the scenes of strife and bloodshed which marked the eleventh century, the amiable and gentle-minded Queen Editha appears indeed, as one of our historians has observed, like "a rose among thorns." The placid and meek sport of party—her pious soul centred itself on that better world where strife entereth not, and discordant passions cannot dwell. Happy was it for this fair English flower, that, for the sake of others, she could dwell resigned in the midst of false splendour, and close the portals of her heart against those affections, which, in too many cases, make us lose the thoughts of hereafter, in the brief and passing joys of an earthly lot.

Editha was the daughter of that celebrated "King-maker," Earl Godwin, who played so distinguished a part in the violent contentions of the Danes and English which desolated the land for so many years. Her father's history is one of those which fill the pages of the past with romantic incident. From a humble position, he rose, first by accident, and afterwards by his genius and valour, to an equality with monarchs, to whom he became allied, and his enormous power swayed the destinies of nations, while kings were playthings in his hands.

After one of the five famous battles fought against the Danes by Ed-

mund Ironside, in which that warlike prince had rescued London, and retrieved the wavering fortunes of his country,<sup>1</sup> a Danish jarl, named Ulf, who had escaped from the scene of contest to a distance from his followers, lost his way in a wood, where, after wandering about through the whole night, he encountered at break of day, a young peasant with a drove of oxen :—"Ulf, having saluted him," says the chronicler, "inquired his name. 'I am called Godwin, son of Ulfnoth,' answered the shepherd, 'and thou, if I mistake not, art of the Danish army?' Thus forced to confess who he was, the Dane entreated the young man to inform him of his distance from the vessels which were stationed in the Severn, or neighbouring rivers, and the road he ought to pursue to gain them. 'Foolish indeed,' replied Godwin, 'is the Dane who expects his safety from a Saxon.' Ulf besought the shepherd, nevertheless, to leave his cattle and guide him, making him those promises of reward which would be likely to influence a poor and simple-minded man. 'The way is not long,' returned the Saxon, 'but it would be dangerous for me to lead thee into it. The peasants, encouraged by our victory of yesterday, are armed throughout the country, and would show no favour, neither to thee, nor to thy guide.'

"On this, the chief took a gold ring from his finger, and offered it to the peasant, who took it, and after contemplating it for a few moments, gave it back to him, saying, 'I will take nothing from thee, but I will try to conduct thee.'

"They passed the day in the cottage of Ulfnoth, Godwin's father; at night, when they were departing, the old man said to the Dane, 'Know, that it is my only son who trusts himself to thy honour: there will be no safety for him amongst his countrymen when he has served thee as a guide; present him, therefore, to thy King, that he may receive him into his service.'

"Ulf promised this and much more for Godwin, and he kept his word. When they arrived at the Danish camp, he made the peasant's son sit in his tent, on a seat as elevated as his own, and treated him in every respect as his son. He obtained a military command for him from King Canute, and in process of time, this identical Saxon shepherd rose to the rank of governor of a province in England, which was occupied by the Danes, and was afterwards destined twice to destroy the foreign power by which he had risen.

"Godwin, from the first, by his promptitude and boldness, rendered service to Canute, and one of his early services was rewarded by the rank of Earl. This was on the occasion of Canute, then in Denmark, undertaking a campaign against the Vends. A battle was fixed for a certain day, with these barbarians, but Godwin, seeing that it was dangerous to lose time, ventured without the King's knowledge, to attack the enemy the night before, whom he entirely routed and put to flight, thereby rendering an essential benefit to the cause of his commander, whose gratitude knew no bounds.

"On Canute's return to England the following spring, the counties of

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<sup>1</sup> Knytlinga Saga.



Kent, Sussex, and Surrey were given to the new Earl; and his services were, shortly after, further rewarded by the hand of Gyda, sister of Earl Ulphon,<sup>1</sup> who afterwards became mother of a numerous and promising family, and of these, one daughter, bearing the maternal name of Gyda or Editha, was destined to become the Queen-Consort of Edward the Confessor."

Godwin had previously been married to a Danish princess, named Thora, by whom he had an only son afterwards drowned in the river Thames, into which he was thrown by an unruly horse. Thora is said to have been nearly related to Canute; she was not, however, the mother of Editha, nor is it desirable to know more of her, as she is described as "a woman of much infamy, for the trade she drove of buying up English youths and maids to sell in Denmark, whereof she made great gain, but ere long was struck with thunder and died."<sup>2</sup>

The laws of Ethelred prove the horrible state of barbarity and cruelty existing in the country at this period; and the sermon extant of Lupus, (Bishop Wulfstan) written against the atrocities committed, is another evidence of the fearful consequence of the unsettled state of society. A traffic in slaves was carried on to an enormous extent. Bristol being one of the great marts, gaining at that early time a remarkable celebrity which the city kept to a late period, deserving the reproach of "her stones being cemented with blood." Greater cruelties were practised in England than amongst negro tribes, "brother sold brother, the father his son, the son his mother."<sup>3</sup>

Both Godwin's wives are spoken of as related to Sweyn, King of Denmark. According to Snorro, Ulf and his sister Gyda, were children of Thorkel Sprakalegg; Ulf had been placed over Denmark by Canute during his absence in England, he being the husband of Estrida, Canute's sister, the repudiated Duchess of Normandy, who at the time of Queen Emma's espousals had been united to her brother. The hand of Ulf's sister, Gyda, was, therefore, likely to be the coveted prize of many a Saxon and Danish chief. By this alliance, Godwin beheld himself a second time closely united to both the English and Danish royal families, and with the children of Ethelred and Canute: and Sweyn Ulfson, afterwards King of Denmark, nephew of his wife Gyda, connected him still further with that country.

Queen Editha is universally represented as possessing great beauty and accomplishments. The ambitious views, as well as affection of her parents, had induced them to bestow on her an education surpassing that of her sex in general.<sup>4</sup> She had been brought up in the Monastery of Wilton, distinguished for its learning, and afterwards noted as the spot selected for the education of "Good Queen Maude," wife of King Henry the First. While still at Wilton, Editha became remarkable for her acquirements, having a knowledge of books rarely attained in any age. As an instance of her taste for literature, Ingulphus relates that when he was a boy, his father being at King Edward's court, he had many interviews

<sup>1</sup> Snorro.

<sup>2</sup> Milton.

<sup>3</sup> Lappenberg.

<sup>4</sup> Burke's English History, Holinshed and others.

with the Queen, who would often stop him as he came from school, make him repeat his lesson, ask him questions in grammar and logic, and as a reward give him "a few pieces of silver, and send him to the larder."<sup>1</sup> Brompton tells us that "her breast was a storehouse of all liberal science," in which she differed greatly from the other members of her family, for neither Godwin nor his sons had any pretensions to literature. All our writers concur in praising her mental acquirements. Malmesbury calls her "a woman whose bosom was the school of every liberal art, though little skilled in earthly matters: on seeing her, if you were amazed at her erudition, you must absolutely languish for the purity of her mind and the beauty of her person."

Editha had been instructed in the popular art of needlework, in which she became quite a proficient. With her own hands the Queen is said to have wrought the magnificent robes<sup>2</sup> in which King Edward was accustomed to array himself on his collar-days or other great occasions; these were embroidered with gold in the most sumptuous manner. This King is described as being tall and well made in person, and possessing a white skin, fair hair, and a rosy complexion. Edward, in spite of his sanctity, delighted in the pomp of dress, in which he was not superior to the young men of his day. The age was one of singular taste for finery, even the clergy studying dress as much as the laity, and seeking to adorn their robes with richer furs than those worn by their neighbours. For this these prelates were reproved by Bishop Wulstan in these words: "Believe me, I never heard chanted *Cattus Dei*, but *Agnus Dei*."<sup>3</sup> Wulstan also boldly inveighed against the effeminate practice, then fashionable, of wearing long hair. When any one came to him to receive a blessing, and bowed down his head for that purpose, Wulstan, before he gave it, cut off a lock of his hair with a little sharp knife that he carried about him, and commanded him, by way of penance, to cut the remainder in a similar manner, denouncing heavy judgments against those who neglected to attend to his injunction.<sup>4</sup> The Saxon method of cutting and arranging the hair in the fourth century had the effect of enlarging the appearance of the face and diminishing the head. At a later period it was worn

<sup>1</sup> Lingard.

<sup>2</sup> The Domesday Book records that Leivede, a Wiltshire maiden, wrought in the time of King Edward *aurifrisium* for the King and Queen. This was a species of gold work, so much valued, that this same person held half a hide of land in Bucks, the grant of Godrei, the sheriff, that she might teach his daughter to make *orfrays*, for many centuries it was in fashion. The exquisite work of Editha has been noticed, and the garments of the Saxon hostages were a subject of surprise to the Normans, as the Conqueror's chaplain tells us: some of these specimens of needlework were left by Queen Matilda in her will to the Abbey of the Holy Trinity of Caen.

<sup>3</sup> Green's Worcester, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Pictures of Edward the Confessor and his Queen Editha, may be seen in Ducarel's Anglo-Norman Antiquities, in Strutt's Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities, and also in Caxton's Golden Legend. Harold's picture may also be seen in both these works. Edward the Confessor, as appears by his seal in Speed, wore very short cropped hair, but whiskers and beard exceedingly long.—Peck's *Desiderata Curiosa*.

diffused upon the shoulders, and the man who seized another by the hair was punishable by law. In France great value was attached to the ornament of hair; it was even necessary to any prince to enable him to ascend the throne, in which the Franks and Saxons differed from the ancient Britons, whose princes cropped their hair like the monks. Great pains were lavished on the cultivation of the hair by the French, so that if any one could boast of a peculiarity in this respect, he obtained a suitable surname, as among the Danes Sweyn was called Forked-beard, and a whole nation was called Longobardi or Lombards.<sup>1</sup>

The kings and nobles, when in their state dress, were habited in a loose coat, which reached down to their ankles, and over that a long robe, fastened on both shoulders, and on the middle of the breast, with a clasp or buckle. The edges and bottoms of their coats, as well as of their robes, were often trimmed with a broad gold edging, or else flowered with different colours.

The soldiers and common people wore close cloaks reaching only to the knee, and a short cloak over the left shoulder, which buckled on the right; this cloak was often trimmed with an edging of gold. The kings and nobles, also, in common were habited in a dress very similar to this, only richer and more elegant.<sup>2</sup>

Editha, notwithstanding her great elevation, is said to have been "very humble, and at variance with no one." This "very beautiful, virtuous, and chaste princess was wholly exempt from the savage pride which distinguished her whole family,"<sup>3</sup> and in a court filled with strife and contention behaved with mildness and benevolence to all around her; so that, however hostile the ancient writers have shown themselves to Godwin and his sons, they have done justice to Editha."

She deserved a better fate than to be united to a man who did not appreciate her virtues and who never could dissociate her from her father, whom he hated, suspecting or affecting to suspect him, to the last, of the murder of his brother, Prince Alfred. Edward was almost forced into his union with Editha, and was perfectly aware of Godwin's ambitious motives in raising his daughter to the throne of England. It was only on the condition of his promise of marriage with her, that the powerful Earl restored him.

Edward resembled his father in disposition, having a weak constitution by nature, and a narrow genius, so that it was not difficult for those who had their own private ends to promote, to obtain an ascendancy over his mind. As for Godwin, he had so much power at court, that as much deference was paid to him as to the King himself, although no real friendship existed between the Earl and his royal master. On one point the King was quite resolved, and that was to put off his marriage with Editha as long as possible, probably with a hope of evading it altogether. Pretext after pretext was devised as an excuse for this delay; but at length, at the expiration of two years, he was obliged to redeem the pledge he had given.

<sup>1</sup> Turner's Anglo-Saxons.

<sup>2</sup> Strutt.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard.

The nuptials were solemnized "ten days before Candlemas,"<sup>1</sup> A. D. 1044, Edward being then in the forty-fourth year of his age, much older than his bride. Although the fact is not exactly stated, it may be presumed that all the proud Godwin family were present at these triumphant espousals, including Githa and the many brothers of Editha, who are said afterwards to have obtained favour in the eyes of the King their brother-in-law, or, at least, to have appeared to do so.

The coronation of Editha soon followed, another triumph to the ambitious aspirations of Earl Godwin, whose aim was thus completely attained. A curious commentary on the deceptive glory of human successes is afforded in an account of the crown worn by Queen Editha on this and other state occasions: it is described in an inventory of that part of the regalia now removed from Westminster to the Tower Jewel House:—

"Queen Editha's crowne, formerly thought to be of massy gould, but upon triall found to be of silver gilt, enriched with garnetts, foule pearle, sapphires, and some odd stones, p. oz. 50½, valued at £16."

If this account be true, it would almost seem as if Edward had intended thus early to affront the pride of the Godwin family, but it is more likely that there was another crown used on the occasion, and that this was not the only one possessed by the Queen; or it might be, that the jewels had been changed. It is interesting to trace back to this epoch those different portions of the modern regalia which are used at the coronation of our English sovereigns:<sup>2</sup> the Sword, the Sceptre, the Orb, the Ring, &c., are all derived from Anglo-Saxon customs, at the ceremony of coronation. The investiture by the ring was one of the most ancient ways of conferring dignity, and the ancient Coronation Ring is called also "The Wedding Ring of England." The queen consort had also a ring provided for her coronation, which is of gold, with a large table ruby set therein, and sixteen other small rubies set round about the ring, of which those next to the setting are the largest, the rest diminishing in proportion. That the sword was carried at Arthur's Coronation has been already mentioned, and not one only, but four several swords, each borne by a separate person. There are still four swords used in the coronation of a British sovereign: 1st. The Sword of State; 2d. The Curtana, or pointless Sword of Mercy; 3d. The Sword of Spiritual Justice; 4th. The Sword of Justice of the Temporality.

At Queen Guenever's Coronation, four queens bore each in their hand a white pigeon, having, probably, an allusion to the feast of Pentecost. Whether the dove which surmounts the sceptre of the monarchs of Britain has the same allusion it is difficult to say. The first House of French Kings always bore for a staff a golden rod, being crooked at one end, to resemble the crosier or pastoral staff, and was the same height as the King who bore it. The Queen-Consort of England has a Virga or Ivory Rod, garnished with gold, rather more than a yard long, surmounted by a dove enamelled white.

St. Edward's Staff, so named from the husband of Editha, is still carried before the English sovereigns in the coronation procession. It is a

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard.



golden sceptre or staff, four feet eleven inches long, having a foot of steel, about four inches in length, with a mound and a cross at the top. It is about three quarters of an inch in diameter, and the ornaments are of gold.

From Edward the Confessor's time also, every English sovereign has been represented on coins or seals as bearing a globe in the left hand. The orb or globe was assumed by Augustus, the Roman Emperor, and friend of Cymbeline, and implied universal dominion. Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, added a cross to the globe. The statue of Justinian is thus described: "In his left hand he held a globe, in which a cross was fixed, which showed that by faith in the cross, he was emperor of the earth. For the globe denotes the earth, which is of like form; and the cross denotes faith, because God in the flesh was nailed to it."

It might have been expected that Edward's union with a princess possessed of so many attractions, and such sweetness of disposition as Editha, would have softened his feelings towards the Godwin family, and by degrees overcome his resentment: on the contrary, it proved but the cause of fresh strife with the Earl, and the hatred of the King towards him seemed transferred but the more bitterly to his daughter, because it could only be shown in that way. Editha could never acquire either the affections or confidence of her husband, and, his tardy nuptials solemnized, the King, far from evincing any love for Editha, did not treat her as his wife; so that, although fear of the powerful Earl, her father, deterred Edward from discarding Editha from his throne, the marriage was a mere matter of form: though attributing his conduct to an excess of self-negation, the titles of Saint and Confessor were afterwards accorded to him by the monkish chroniclers, and the most extravagant praises lavished on the virtuous example set by him, an example which, in those ages, called forth unqualified admiration.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed recorded, that at the time when Edward was importuned by his council to marry, he himself disclosed to Editha that he had bound himself to a life of celibacy, and should merely place her by his side on the throne:<sup>2</sup> William of Malmesbury declares he never could discover whether, in this instance, Edward acted from dislike to her family, which he prudently dissembled from the exigency of the times, or from motives of a pious nature;<sup>3</sup> but authors generally attribute his conduct rather to the first cause.<sup>4</sup> The smothered aversion he entertained for the Earl, was repeatedly exhibited in his treatment of Editha, his union with her being a daily recurring sting, showing the fear and forced submission under which he writhed. The gentle Queen resigned herself without a murmur to her husband's ill-treatment; and when she found all her endeavours to win the affections of Edward proved fruitless, she turned her thoughts solely to religion, and consoled herself by performing acts of devotion. Some, indeed, go so far as to say that Editha was perfectly agreeable to King Edward, but that her feelings being the same as his own, they mutually agreed to live on these distant terms. Edward was popular with the whole nation, and he is represented by his friends, the monks, as possessed of such great

<sup>1</sup> Hume, William of Malmesbury.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard.

<sup>3</sup> Holinshed.

<sup>4</sup> Grafton.

patience, that he could scarcely ever be put in a passion.<sup>1</sup> He was, besides, the "father of the poor, and protector of the weak, more willing to give than to receive, and better pleased to pardon than to punish." The Queen is said also to have distinguished herself by her generosity.

In one point, certainly, Edward and his Queen were agreed, the patronage of the church and its holy prelates. Leofstan, Abbot of St. Alban's, is spoken of as the friend, confessor, and counsellor of both Edward and Editha:<sup>2</sup> to the former he filled the office of chaplain, and between this prelate and Queen Editha was a strict friendship.<sup>3</sup>

An old register of the Church of Worcester testifies how "Agelwin Dean of Worcester, and his brother Ordric, gave three lassats of land *in Cundicotan* to the monks there, which grant is confirmed by Edward,<sup>4</sup> and then Queen Editha."<sup>5</sup>

One of the earliest undertakings of King Edward after his marriage, was the foundation of that noble structure, the Abbey of Westminster. While yet an exile in Normandy, the son of Ethelred had vowed, in case of his obtaining the crown of his ancestors, that he would undertake a pilgrimage to Rome; and now that he was firmly seated on the throne, he did not forget this vow. It had been a subject of meditation until the year 1043, when he summoned his nobles and clergy, and informed them of his intentions. It was suggested that to go to Rome in person, would be dangerous both to himself and to his kingdom, but that ambassadors should be sent to the Pope to obtain a dispensation. This advice was adopted by Edward, and the dispensation granted, on condition that the money intended to be spent on the journey should be given to the poor, and that the King should either erect a new monastery, or repair some old one to the honour of St. Peter. On this King Edward caused his whole estates and possessions to be decimated, and appropriated to the pulling down the ruined Saxon Church which King Sigebert had built, and erecting in the same place a stately fabric, instead of the money being expended, as he had purposed, in a pilgrimage to Rome.

The earliest charter to the monastery is dated A. D. 1045, and signed first by the King, then by his mother "Alfgitha," and thirdly by Editha, his Queen. It would, therefore, seem that both ladies were present at the donation of the charter, and that the proud Norman widow of Ethelred and Canute took precedence in this instance, as perhaps in others, of her gentle daughter-in-law, the child of her old rival, Godwin.

Edward likewise founded that Church of St. Margaret, which now stands without the Abbey. The old church of St. Margaret standing in the way of the cloisters which were to be erected for the Abbey of St. Peter, the King caused it to be pulled down, and the present building erected."<sup>6</sup>

The erection of the Church of St. Peter was certainly the great event of Edward's reign: it occupied a space of twenty years, and was only finished at the close of his career. While the King was occupied in directing the new building at Westminster, an object zealously seconded

<sup>1</sup> Hallam.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale.

<sup>3</sup> Weever.

<sup>4</sup> Lingard.

<sup>5</sup> Carter and Dugdale, Selden.

<sup>6</sup> Dart's Westminster.

by his amiable consort, Editha began and completed an Abbey of stone at Wilton, in lieu of the wooden one in which she had been educated; most of the early Saxon buildings being constructed of wood;<sup>1</sup> this circumstance marks the Queen's attachment to the spot in which her earlier years, probably the happiest portion of her life, had been passed.<sup>2</sup>

Editha appears to have had considerable property in England for her own private use, so that she was able to indulge her wishes in respect to pious donations and charities.

Her estates were very numerous, and situated in almost every county in England. In Somersetshire alone, she held Milverton, Twiverton, Crewkerne, Luckham, Bruiton, and Chewton Mendip, manors which yielded an annual sum of 100*l*.<sup>3</sup> Martock likewise, also in the same county, and Camel-Queens, so named from being vested in the queens of this realm. This place, at the Norman Survey, yielded 23*l*. of white money. Rivenhall, in Essex, also formed part of Editha's estates; so also was Bath (called Bade in Domesday Book). Wycombe, in Bucks, which was worth 12*l*. per annum, belonged to Editha; and Buthric held that manor, as her tenant,<sup>4</sup> during Edward's reign.

Notwithstanding she was the possessor of all these rich territories, Editha, on one occasion, manifests something of the acquisitive spirit of the Godwin race in laying claim to the town of Fisherton, which Leofrina, "a London Lady," had bequeathed by her will to the Abbey of Peterborough. Editha disputed this donation, and laid claim to the village in question, which she pretended Leofrina had decreed to her. A contest ensued, which terminated in the Abbey paying forty marks of gold to the Queen, and forty marks more in the ornaments of the church.<sup>5</sup> Leofrina was on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, at the time of her death, about A. D. 1060. She is noticed by Stowe among his "Worthy Acts of Women."<sup>6</sup>

"The royal duty or revenue, known by the name of Queen Gold, and which belongs to every queen of England during her marriage to the king, was first paid to Queen Editha. This money is due and payable by persons in this kingdom and Ireland, on divers grants of the king, by way of fine or oblation, &c., and is one full tenth part above the entire fines on pardons, contracts, or agreements, which becomes a real debt to the queen, by the name of *AURUM REGINÆ*, upon the party's bare agreement with the king for his fine, and recording the same."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wilton nunnery was first built by St. Alburg, sister of Egbert, for an abbess and twelve nuns; the number of the latter was increased by Alfred the Great to twenty-six.

<sup>2</sup> Domesday Book, Britton and Brayley, Collinson.

<sup>3</sup> Camden relates this on the authority of Mr. Douce in his account of Wilton. That author says he found it in a Life of Edward the Confessor.—Dugdale.

<sup>4</sup> Langley's History and Antiquities of Desborough.

<sup>5</sup> Stowe's London.

<sup>6</sup> Ency. Brit.

<sup>7</sup> Selden, who names the duty called "*Aurum Reginæ*," mentioning the following privileges attached to the queenly dignities in England:—"Divers prerogatives also are allowed in our laws to the Queen-wife, as those of making gifts or contracts, or suing without the King, and receiving by gift from her husband (which



For some time after the marriage of Edward, peace was preserved between him and Earl Godwin, whose family were admitted to familiar communion with him and the Queen. During this interval, an incident occurred considered so worthy of note at the time as to be recorded in imperishable stone. It is represented in the eighth compartment of the screen of King Edward the Confessor, in Westminster Abbey,<sup>1</sup> and presents to the eye, as well as to the mind, a picture of manners very remarkable. Tosti and Harold, the sons of Godwin, had a quarrel at the King's table; and, in the sculpture, "the contending brothers are shown in the foreground of the design, whilst Earl Godwin and the King and Queen are on the opposite side of a table, on which is a covered cup, with several articles of food." The quarrel between the sons of Godwin, who were yet boys, arose in consequence of the envious jealousy of Tosti at the King's drinking to Harold, his younger brother, in preference to himself. Harold, by superior strength, after Tosti had caught him by the hair and pulled him violently to the ground, recovered his feet, "and layed mightie blowes upon his brother, so that the King himself was fayne to put his hand and to separate them."<sup>2</sup> He then foretold the calamities which would befall the realm through the contention of the brothers, when arrived at manhood, and intimated their untimely and respective fates. The outline of this relation is corroborated by different historians. The designs for the singular sculptures upon the screen in Westminster Abbey have been chiefly deduced from Ailred's account of the Life and Miracles of King Edward, which was written in the time of Henry II., and presented to that monarch by Abbot Lawrance, on the very day, A. D. 1163, when, in honour of his recent canonization, the Confessor's remains were removed into a new shrine."

One of the remarkable and interesting records left of Queen Editha is that which concerns the Installation of Leofric, as first Bishop of Exeter. King Edward removed the Bishop's See from St. Germanus, at Crediton, to Exeter; and Editha, with her husband, assisted to instal Leofric, already Lord Chancellor of England and a member of the King's Privy

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no other *femme couverte* may do), having her courts and officers, as if she were a sole person; that if the King or she be plaintiff, the summons in the process need not have the solemnity of fifteen days, which is extended also to their children, brothers, sisters, and *à ses parens*, as Bracton says, and such like. It is also treason to plot against her life."—Selden's Titles of Honour.

The duty was suspended during the reign of Edward VI., Mary and Elizabeth, there being no Queen-consort for sixty years: it was claimed by the Queens of James the First and Charles the First.—Sir H. Ellis's Introduction to Domesday Book.

<sup>1</sup> Lambard's Topographical Dictionary, article "Wynsore." That the Queen was present when Harold and Tosti quarrelled is confirmed by Caxton. Holinshead says it happened at Windsor the last year of Edward's reign. A MS. written in the time of Edward the First, and illuminated with great care, represents this famous quarrel, and has been copied in Strutt's Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities, where may be seen the picture of Queen Editha. Snorro tells us that Harold, Godwin's youngest son, "was brought up at Edward's court, and was his foster-son. The King loved him very much, and kept him as his own son, for he had no son."

<sup>2</sup> Neale's Westminster Abbey.



Council, as the first abbot of that church. The installation took place on the 27th of May, A. D. 1049, in the sixth year of the reign of Edward. As an instance of the great favour and honour which the bishop received from both the King and Queen at his instalment, we may quote the words of King Edward's Charter, viz.: "I, King Edward, taking Bishop Leofric by the right hand, and Edith, my Queen, by the left, do install him the first and most famous Bishop of Exeter, with a great desire of abundance of blessings to all such as should further and increase the same; but with a fearful and execrable curse upon all such as should diminish or take anything from it;" and within the choir, adjoining the high altar, is a monument, fairly arched, and under the same arch are three seats with side pillars of brass, erected in memory of the said King Edward, Edith his Queen, and Leofric, the first Bishop of Exeter; the middle of them being the seat of the said bishop, sitting in his pontificals between the King and the Queen.<sup>1</sup>

The year 1051 was signalized by one of the most dreadful famines ever known in England. A quarter of wheat rose to sixty pennies, a sum equal to fifteen shillings of our present money; consequently it was as dear if it now cost 7*l.* 10*s.*, and far exceeded that great dearth in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when a quarter of wheat was sold for 4*l.*<sup>2</sup> Thousands were perishing for want, and it was the sight of the misery of the people on this occasion that led the King to repeal the heavy and odious tax called the Danegelt.<sup>4</sup> The mind of Edward was first attracted to the circumstance by his Queen Editha; who, one day, accompanied by her brother Harold, conducted him into the royal treasury, where the vast amount of this collected tax had been deposited. Edward was so affected by the sight of this large sum at such a moment of national affliction, that he immediately ordered the money to be restored to its former owners, and no more to be raised on such an assessment. Few incidents in the life of Editha show her character in a more humane and amiable light than this instance of blessed pity.

In the year previous to the famine, an open rupture took place between Earl Godwin and the King, on the occasion of Eustace, Earl of Boulogne, the husband of Goda, King Edward's sister, having landed at Dover, and unjustly and tyrannously treating the inhabitants—forcing them to provide dwellings for himself and his men—a fray with the townsmen ensuing, in which many were killed. The foreigners, being overcome by the people of the country after a loss of eighty men, fled to Gloucester to the King, complaining of their wrongs. Earl Godwin, who took the part of the English, but could not convince King Edward, assembled a large army and marched into Gloucestershire, threatening to make war on his sovereign unless Eustace and all his men were delivered into his

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale, Weever, Isaacke's Antiquities of Exeter, Speed.

<sup>2</sup> A snow-storm fell this year, in January, so deep that it covered the ground to the middle of March, causing cattle and fowls in abundance to perish; and the next year was remarkable for an earthquake, and lightnings which burnt up the cornfields and produced a dearth.—Howel, Med. Hist. Angl.

<sup>3</sup> Hume.

<sup>4</sup> Hoveden and Ingulphus, Sharon Turner.

hands. The King refused, and commanded Godwin to repair to court and account for his conduct. The royal order not being obeyed, Edward, by sentence of his court, banished Godwin and his five sons from England. Accordingly, the Earl and his wife, their son Tosti and his wife Judith, daughter of Baldwin Earl of Flanders, with Sweyn and Gurth, also sons of Godwin, took shipping, with immense treasures, and went to Flanders, to Earl Baldwin. Harold and Leofwin went to Bristol, and crossed the sea into Ireland: there they took refuge with King Donough, who is said to have espoused Driella, their sister. The Irish King received his English relatives with much honour, and they remained in Ireland all that winter, "on the King's security." The following year, Donough assisted them with a squadron of nine ships, or, as some say, a considerable body of land forces, with which they made a successful landing in Britain.<sup>1</sup> Of Donough, it is related that he either introduced first into Ireland, or encouraged, the custom of celebrating games or athletic sports on the Sabbath-day; the *cœstus*, or gloves used by the pugilists, being distributed, as it is said, in the King's own mansion,<sup>2</sup> perhaps, by the hand of the fair Driella. This was plainly done in honour of the day, and not a desecration of its duties; for, another author tells us that this king was a scrupulous observer of the Sabbath, and forbade any one to carry burdens, or hold hunting-matches or fairs on that day. Some have thought that the marriage of Driella, and flight of many English nobles to Ireland, in consequence of William the Conqueror's tyranny, where the Saxon protection, through her influence, was to be found, occasioned an improved knowledge of architecture in that country.<sup>3</sup>

The King had not only banished Godwin and his sons, but caused their estates to be confiscated. These were enormous,<sup>4</sup> and spread over numerous counties.

As might have been expected, the disgrace of her family involved also that of Editha; but it was necessary to have some form of accusation against her, which was not long wanting to her enemies. The usual pretence of infidelity to the King, a common resource against a defenceless woman, was set up, the accuser chosen being Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury. This man was a native of Normandy and monk of Jumièges, who had been known to King Edward during his exile abroad, and whom he had invited to England. After his arrival he was made Bishop of London, and subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>5</sup> Of this prelate Speed remarks, "I am fully persuaded that the accusation with which Editha was charged by Robert, the Archbishop, was more upon envy to her father than truth of so foul a fact in her whose virtues were so many and so memorable, by report of authors that were eye-witnesses." The charge would be unworthy of notice but for the consequences to the innocent Queen, who on her death-bed, as well as at the time, protested that it was entirely false; her whole course of life was sufficient to prove this, even if the motives of Edward had not been as transparent as they

<sup>1</sup> Moore, O'Halloran.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Grose's Antiquities.

<sup>4</sup> Roger of Wendover.

<sup>5</sup> William of Malmesbury.

were. His vengeance against Earl Godwin, whether merited or not,—and in this instance it was ill-directed,—could not be complete without his daughter sharing his punishment.

Infamous and unjust as this accusation of the Archbishop was, Editha was treated most rigorously by the King her husband, who not only expelled her from his court, but subjected her to every possible disgrace. All her goods were taken from her, and, stripped of her lands, furniture and money, in which she shared the fate of the whole Godwin family, Editha was committed a prisoner to the Monastery of Wherwell, in Hampshire. The sister of King Edward presided over this establishment, and that abbess was appointed to keep her prisoner “very strictly;” one solitary female alone of all her train being permitted to attend on the deposed Queen. The King’s Norman favourites indulged in scoffs and jeers at her expense, remarking, “that it was not fit that at the time when her family were suffering banishment, she herself should sleep on down.” So many contradictions occur in early history, that, although some writers have recorded the severe treatment experienced by Editha, a contemporary historian affirms that on this distressing occasion the poor Queen was conducted with royal pomp to Wherwell, and informed that her confinement there was only a measure of temporary precaution.<sup>1</sup> As the author of this statement dedicated his work, which was the *Life of King Edward, to Queen Editha*, it deserves to have some weight. The circumstance would show Edward’s own conviction of the Queen’s innocence, and how little she merited harsh treatment. There is a clear proof also in his abandoning himself to the rule of Archbishop Robert at this epoch, as he had formally resigned himself to that of Godwin, that he required the direction of some master-mind, and was “steered by each pilot according as the rudder of his destiny was turned.” Under the influence of the Archbishop’s faction, it seemed by this sudden stroke on the fortune of Editha, that Edward’s intention really was never again to receive back his wife, and that, although till now he had preserved fair terms with the daughter of his enemy’s hated house, he had parted from her at the very first moment that he could do so with safety to himself.<sup>2</sup>

Editha’s accusation and punishment were similar to those of Queen Emma, who received at the hands of her son no better treatment than his wife, and the same convent received both. However gratified Queen Emma might have been to have seen the ruin of the man who had alternately been her bitterest enemy and her ally, she could scarcely help sympathizing with her innocent daughter-in-law, the victim of the enmity of the same Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been instrumental in her own degradation, signal as the victory she obtained over him had been.

Editha bore her wrongs more meekly, and made no appeal to the fiery ordeal which Queen Emma had passed through; perhaps, aware of her father’s real power, and the love borne to him by the English, as well as their hatred of the Norman favourites, she looked forward to his return

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Stowe, p. 96, and alluded to by Dr. Lingard.

<sup>2</sup> Rapin.



and her own restoration; and these hopes supported her through a whole year, in spite of the natural tears which she shed during the forced retreat to which her husband's weakness and cruelty had condemned her.

But though Godwin, taken unawares, had submitted for a time to the force of circumstances, it was not to be expected that so powerful a leader, and one so popular in the country, would be content to abandon his possessions and his sway to the Norman favourites of the irresolute and priest-governed Edward. The struggle was soon renewed, and this time conducted with so much skill and vigour that, after a series of defeats and mortifications, Edward was obliged to succumb. The strong feeling of the nation was in favour of Earl Godwin, whose disgrace was felt to have taken place in consequence of his having defended the rights of the people against the oppression of the insolent Normans, and the King found himself unable to stand against the pressure. The Anglo-Danish yoke had, by this time, become light to the English. Canute had been admired and esteemed; but the foreign notions of Edward, which condemned everything English, habits, customs, and language, had disgusted the people with his court. The ill-treatment of Editha, the daughter of their popular chief, rankled in their minds; so far from molesting him, they declared for Godwin, from every part of the coast along which his fleet paused to ask for supplies, and when they found that a powerful fleet from Ireland, under the conduct of one of his sons, had reinforced his army, the whole country rushed to his side. The Welsh, glad of an opportunity to revenge old feuds, joined with the strongest party, and England was once more in the control of Godwin.

Then commenced a headlong flight on the other side; "there was mounting in hot haste"—the Norman favourites, seized with panic, rushed for their lives to their ships, got on board at any sacrifice, and left the King and his capital to the successful Earl. Edward was forced to appear content after having stood stiffly out as long as it was possible; and the end of all this confusion, bloodshed, and devastation, was Godwin's entire restoration to all his honours and possessions, the expulsion of Robert the Archbishop, and all the Normans in power, and the return, with suitable pomp and circumstance, of the disgraced Queen Editha.<sup>1</sup>

All now seemed prosperous with the family of Godwin, and Editha's heart was relieved of the burthen of sorrow which had lately nearly crushed her. Nothing was now to be heard but rejoicing; and festivals, both courtly and religious, filled up the time of the triumphant party. It was at one of these, which took place at Easter, at Winchester, that while sitting at table with the King, the Queen and all the court, in the midst of conviviality,<sup>2</sup> Earl Godwin was suddenly seized with a fit of apoplexy and fell speechless to the ground. He was borne from the chamber by his sons Tostig and Harold, and after a few days' extreme agony, expired.

By Norman writers, whose enmity to his house of course induced misrepresentation, and who delight in striking scenes, the story of Earl Godwin's death has been differently related. According to them one of the royal cupbearers, when presenting wine, happened to stumble with one

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle, William of Malmesbury, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Saxon Chronicle.



foot and saved himself from falling with the aid of the other, on which Godwin exclaimed: "Thus brother helps brother." Edward, from whose mind no asseverations, public or private, could efface the impression of Godwin's guilt, looked sternly at him and said: "Yes—and had Alfred lived, so might he have helped me." Godwin, indignant at the imputed charge, replied: "I know that you still suspect me of your brother's murder, but may God, who is true and just, not permit this morsel of bread to enter my throat without choking me if he suffered death or injury from me or by my counsel."

Having said this, the King blessed the bread, but the instant the Earl put it in his mouth, it choked him.<sup>1</sup> "Thus," adds the chronicler, "did Providence expose and punish the traitor and murderer."

If such a scene really took place, no doubt the passion of Godwin on finding that, under whatever circumstances they met, Edward persisted in casting the same crime in his teeth, was the cause of the apoplexy which seized him on the instant. Such events have been frequent when persons are violently excited, particularly after being heated at an entertainment in times when conviviality was carried to excess.

Godwin was so little a friend to the Church, and Edward was so completely the tool of Churchmen, that it naturally follows that the former should suffer in the report of those historians who look upon Edward as a saint. The death of the Earl happened at an unfortunate juncture, and great was the lamentation throughout England for the great "Child of Sussex," as he was called.<sup>2</sup>

Probably, if Edward had dared to do so, the family of the man he detested would again have suffered from his violence; but the times were altered, and all he could do was now to secure himself and endeavour to settle the succession on those nearest him in blood. He sent, therefore, to the Emperor, Henry III., at Cologne, requesting that the son of Edmund Ironside, whom he protected, and who had married his niece, might come over to him in England. After some delay, the Prince accordingly arrived with his wife Agatha and his children, Edgar Atheling, Margareta, and Christina, but he died almost directly after, suddenly, in London.

Meantime, Harold, the son of Godwin, was fighting against the usurper Macbeth, of famous memory, in the North, and succeeded to the Earldom of Siward of Northumberland, in whose cause he had drawn the

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle, 1053, 15th April.

<sup>2</sup> The famous Godwin, or Goodwin, Sands, formerly part of the Earl's domain, off the coast of Kent, lie between the North and South Foreland; and, as they run parallel with the coast for three leagues together, at about two leagues and a half distant from it, they add to the security of that spacious road, the Downs; for, while the land shelters ships with the wind from south-west to north-west only, these sands break all the force of the sea, when the wind is at east-south-east. The most dangerous wind, when blowing hard off the Downs, is the south-south-west. — Ency. Brit.

The lands were given to the Monastery of St. Augustine at Canterbury, and the Abbot, neglecting to keep in repair the wall that defended them from the sea, the whole tract was drowned in the year 1100, leaving these sands so great, yet so fatal a safeguard to the coast.

sword. A long series of contentions occupied him till after tranquillity was temporarily restored, he set out for Normandy on the errand which threw him into the intimacy of Duke William, so fraught with consequences to himself and England.

Whether any change came over the spirit of Queen Editha, after the calamity of losing her father, and whether she conceived it necessary to exercise a rigour and vigilance which appeared hitherto foreign to her nature,<sup>1</sup> it is difficult to determine; but she has been accused of abandoning her accustomed mildness, and acting with cruelty about this time. Most probably the acts of which she is accused should rather be attributed to her brothers, Tosti or Harold, who then swayed Northumberland. It appears that certain retainers of a Northumbrian chief were murdered in the court of Edward, and "the Queen's orders" are cited as giving sanction to the fact. "Even this fair rose was stained with blood,"<sup>2</sup> says an annalist; but it does not follow that she is guilty of more than severity, dictated by the representations of her brothers. The alleged treachery of Tostig has not been confuted, and this act was, doubtless, but a feature of the tragedy in which he performed.

Tosti having allured some Northumbrian nobles to his own chamber, in his palace at York, under pretence of concluding a peace, had caused them to be assassinated. These atrocities, and the imposition of a severe tax, caused the Northumbrians to arm against the Government. Tostig was surprised at York, and escaped by flight: his treasures and armory were pillaged, and two hundred Danish and English guards, with their leaders, Amund and Ravensworth, being made prisoners, were led out of the city and massacred in cold blood on the north bank of the Ouse. Morcar and Edwin were placed by the insurgents at their head; they were met by Harold, who, having inquired into their demands, obtained the King's assent to them. These were to confirm the laws of Canute, and appoint Morcar Earl of Northumberland. Tostig, dissatisfied at this peace, repaired to Bruges, the usual asylum of his family.<sup>3</sup>

The establishment of chaplains in the royal household is of very ancient date, and even in the Pagan times we find priests attendant on their regal patrons. Editha and her brother Harold had their chaplains. Walther, afterwards Bishop of Hereford, filled this office with the Queen; he was appointed to that see, and an instrument issued for the temporalities of Hereford in the year 1060, having previously been consecrated at Rome, together with Aldred, Archbishop of York, and Gisa, Bishop of Wells, the King's chaplain (April 4th, 1059).

Gisa was, as well as Walther, a native of Lorraine, and is said to have been treated with the utmost consideration by Queen Editha. It appears that, when Harold, Earl of Wessex, was banished by Edward, the King bestowed his possessions on the Church of Wells. Harold afterwards made a piratical descent in those parts, and having raised contributions among his former tenants, despoiled the church of its ornaments, drove away the canons, invaded their possessions, and converted them to his own

<sup>1</sup> Rapin.

<sup>2</sup> Turner, Holinshed.

<sup>3</sup> Holinshed, Lingard, &c.

use.<sup>1</sup> In vain had Gisa, who, on entering into his new diocese, found the church estates in a sad condition, expostulated with his royal patron on this outrageous usage, but the more generous and considerate Editha, bestowed on Gisa the manors of Mark and Mudgley as in part compensation for the injuries his bishopric had sustained through her brother's depredations. Harold,<sup>2</sup> on being restored to favour, procured Gisa's banishment, and still later, when on the throne, he resumed the estates of which he had formerly been deprived. That William the Conqueror recalled Gisa from exile, and with some trivial exceptions, restored to the Church of Wells all Harold's estates, was one of the many proofs he gave of his respect for Queen Editha, that prelate's generous benefactress.

Of the King's Chamberlain, or Thane of the Bower, "Bar-Theyne," an incident is on record, which gives a trait of Edward's character, more simple than just, and more good-natured than prudent; this officer was the appointed Keeper of the King's purse, and bore the name of Hugoline. "It chanced that Edward was lying in bed, and, as it appears, in the daytime, when the chamberlain came in and busied himself about the chest which held the King's money, either putting somewhat in, or taking somewhat out; and then he quitted the room, forgetting to lock the chest. The King saw him, and so did the little scullion-boy, who, fully persuaded that the Confessor was asleep, crept softly to the tempting hoard, and filling his bosom with the gold, he softly stole away. The King saw him, but said naught. Having safely deposited his acquisition, he ventured a second time into the King's chamber, made a second attempt, and was equally successful. The King saw him, but said naught. A third time he approached the hoard, and then Edward, alarmed, not for the safety of the money, but for the safety of the thief, exclaimed, 'Have a care, boy, and be off with what thou hast; for if Hugoline finds thee out, not a penny will he leave thee!'"

The lord chamberlain still displays the "key," as the token of the office.<sup>3</sup>

In 1062, Editha assisted at the dedication of Waltham Abbey. The estate of Waltham, which had devolved on the crown, had been bestowed by Edward the Confessor on his brother-in-law Harold, with a considerable grant of land. Harold rebuilt or enlarged the monastery, for the purpose of keeping a holy cross, said to have been miraculously brought thither, and richly endowed it as a college, for a dean and eleven secular black canons. In King Edward's Charter of Confirmation, dated 1062, it is stated that Harold having founded a monastery to the holy faith, the King caused it to be honourably dedicated according to the due form and order of a holy church of God, "in the remembrance," so it is expressed, "of me and my wife, named Editha," for the founder himself, his father and mother, and for all related to him in consanguinity, whether living

<sup>1</sup> Collinson's Somersetshire.

<sup>2</sup> Leofgar, chaplain of Harold, preceded Walther in the see of Hereford, and had scarcely become a bishop when he forsook his chrism and rood, his spiritual weapons, and took to his spear and sword, and so going to the field against Griffith, the Welsh King, was slain, together with many of his priests.

<sup>3</sup> Palgrave.



or dead; and Harold bestowed seventeen lordships on this foundation, all which King Edward, to redeem his own and his predecessor's sins, confirmed to the Abbey, free of all suit and service, and with ample privileges, which he signed and sealed with the holy cross himself, together with his Queen Editha, and fifty-six of his great men. An immense number of rich and precious gifts were also bestowed by the noble founder on the Abbey.<sup>1</sup> In the Royal Charter appear the names of Stigand, Archbishop of Dover, and Harold, to which are added those of the King and Queen.<sup>2</sup>

The leisure of King Edward was divided between prayer and the chase; the latter always a favourite pastime with our Saxon monarchs. At Brill, in Buckinghamshire, was a palace to which King Edward would frequently resort that he might have the pleasure of hunting in Bernwood Forest. At that time the forest was much infested by a wild boar, which at length was fortunately slain by a huntsman of the name of Nigel. This person the King rewarded for his service by a grant of some lands, which he was to hold by a horn, a mode of livery common in those days, and of which an instance has already been given in this volume. "On the land thus given Nigel built a large manor-house, called *Borestall*, or *Borstall*, in memory of the event through which he obtained possession." This estate has descended in uninterrupted succession, by several heirs female, from the family of Nigel to that of Aubrey, and the original horn by which it was conveyed to the former is in the possession of Sir John Aubrey, Bart, as well as a folio volume, composed about the reign of Henry the Third, containing transcripts of papers relating to the manor, with a rude delineation of the site of Borstall House and its contiguous lands, beneath which is the figure of a man on one knee, presenting a boar's head on the point of a sword to the King, who is returning him a coat of arms. The horn is of a dark brown colour, variegated and veined like tortoise-shell; the ends are tipped with silver, and fitted with wreaths of leather to hang round the neck."<sup>3</sup>

Edward the Confessor built also for himself, in Essex, in a well-wooded locality, which from its solitude was suited to devotion, a goodly residence, or hunting-seat, known by the name of Have-he-Ring, or Take-the-Ring, as it would be rendered in modern English; at the time he resided there—whether alone or with the Queen, is not recorded—being, as it is said, troubled in his devotions by the sound of the nightingales, he humbly besought from God their absence, from which time forward "the song of the bird" was never more heard, except beyond the pales of his park, where, as in other places, they would abundantly resort.<sup>4</sup> Of Havering this legend is on record:—An aged pilgrim, from Jerusalem, solicited alms from King Edward, who, his almoner not being present, drew a ring from his finger, and presented it to the mendicant. This ring was after-

<sup>1</sup> Ogborne's Essex.

<sup>2</sup> Fuller's History of Waltham.

<sup>3</sup> Britton and Brasley. This curious plan and a representation of the horn have been engraved in the third volume of the *Archæologia*, whence many of the above particulars were derived.

<sup>4</sup> Camden.



wards returned by the pilgrim to certain Englishmen, in the East, to be restored to King Edward, with this message, that he had given it to St. John the Evangelist, who sent it back to him to inform him of the day on which it was appointed that he should die: the day named was January 5th, 1062. Accordingly, in passing through Westminster Cloisters into the Dean's Yard, you may see the King and Pilgrim cut in stone over the gate.<sup>1</sup> It is said that when the King received the pilgrim's message, he was taken ill, that he distributed his wealth to the poor, and prepared himself for the close of his earthly career. One subject, however, had for a long time pressed on the mind of the monarch; the completion of that grand undertaking, the Abbey of St. Peter's, Westminster. Edward had determined that the church should be dedicated in the most solemn and impressive manner, and for that purpose had convened a general assembly of all the bishops and great men in the kingdom, to be witnesses of the ceremony. It was the last Christmas festival which the pious monarch was destined to celebrate, memorable to his own and succeeding ages by the fact of this consecration and opening of an edifice, the building of which had occupied his entire reign. A splendid festival was to be held in the adjoining palace, to which all the nobles were invited.

On the vigil of Christmas the King was attacked by the fever, which ultimately proved fatal.<sup>2</sup> For the three following days he combatted the violence of the disease by a firmness and affected cheerfulness, which were shown in his holding his court as usual, and presiding at the royal banquet.<sup>3</sup>

The festival of the Innocents<sup>4</sup> was that which had been fixed on for the dedication of the new church, that edifice which had been so long and anxiously superintended during its progress by the monarch. When the day arrived, Edward was unable to quit his chamber, but would not delay the ceremony on that account. In the absence of her husband, it was the delegated office of Queen Editha to take charge of the decorations, and become his representative;—"providing all, arranging all, superintending all, she acted for both King and Queen."<sup>5</sup> On the same day the grand Convention was held, in the chamber of the doomed King, for the purpose of signing his great charter of donations, the third which had been bestowed.<sup>6</sup> The King, Queen, two archbishops, ten bishops, and many of the abbots and nobility, were present on the occasion. The earliest charter bears the date of 1045, and has the signatures of the King, the Queen, and the King's mother, Emma of Normandy, whose name, as before, precedes that of the Queen.

Some have asserted that Edward really was present at the solemn pageant of the dedication of the new abbey, and that he was taken ill immediately after it was over, and removed from the abbey to his bed; but others maintain a contrary opinion, and say that the fact of the King's absence, and the idea of danger in his condition of health, neces-

<sup>1</sup> Hearne, Caxton.

<sup>2</sup> Lingard.

<sup>3</sup> Dart's Westminster.

<sup>4</sup> December 28.

<sup>5</sup> Twysden.

<sup>6</sup> Dart's Westminster.

sarily suggested in consequence, threw a deep gloom over the thousands who had assembled to witness the spectacle.

Edward lingered for a week longer in his sufferings. His death took place on the 5th of January, 1066, at Westminster, and the chamber in which he expired still remained in Camden's time, "close to Sir Thomas Cotton's House." The following account of the deathbed of the saintly monarch is from Caxton's *Golden Legende* :—

"Among the persons who surrounded the death-bed of Edward, were the Queen, Duke Harold, Robert, keeper of the palace, and Stigand. This last gave no credence to the prophetic words uttered by Edward, concerning the approaching disasters of the country, and, ascribing it to the King's age and feebleness, made it out to be a phantasy; but others present wept, sorrowed, and wrung their hands. Edward, perceiving his hour drew nigh, spoke to them that stood weeping about him, and in comforting them, said, 'Forsooth, if ye loved me ye would pray that I should pass from this world to the Father of Heaven, there to receive the joy which is promised to all true Christian men: put ye away your weeping, and speed forth my journey with prayers and holy psalms, and with alms-deeds. For though my enemy, the Fiend, may not overcome me in my faith, yet there is none found so perfect but he will assay, and tempt to let or to fear him.' When he beheld the Queen, and saw her weep and sigh, he said to her oftentimes, 'My daughter, weep not, for I shall not die, but I shall live, and shall depart from the land of death, I believe, to see the goodness of God in the land of life.' And then he set his mind all on God, and gave himself wholly to the faith of the Church, in the hope and promises of Christ, under the sacraments of the Church. He commended the Queen to her brother in praising her goodness and virtue unto his lords, and declared to them their mode of life. 'For she was to him in open places as his wife, and in secret places as his sister.'<sup>1</sup> And he commanded, also, that her dowry should be made sure to her; and that they that came with him out of Normandy should be put to their choice, whether they would abide still in England, and be endowed with livelihood after their degree, or else return again into Normandy with a sufficient reward; and he chose his place for his own sepulture in the Church of St. Peter, which he had newly builded. And among words of praising, he yielded up his spirit to God in the year of our Lord 1066."

The last wishes of the Confessor were strictly observed, and his remains deposited before the high altar in the Church of St. Peter's, Westminster, the funeral obsequies being attended by those very nobles he had himself invited to the solemn dedication of that sacred edifice:<sup>2</sup> the royal inter-

<sup>1</sup> Ailred.

<sup>2</sup> Robert of Gloucester, who says he died on the 4th and was buried on the 12th, thus notices the obsequies of Edward:—"With Edward the happiness of the English expired, liberty perished, and all vigour was inhumed. At his exequies, bishops and a multitude of priests and ecclesiastics, with dukes, earls, and governors, assembled together. A crowd of monks went thither, and innumerable bodies of people flew hastily to his funeral. Here psalms resound, there sighs and tears burst out; everywhere joy and grief commixed, are carried to the

ment took place on Twelfth Day, as some say, the day following that of the dedication of the abbey. As soon as Edward's mortal remains were placed in the tomb, "the same Witan which had met to consecrate the abbey,"<sup>1</sup> proceeded to elect their new king. In this crisis, Harold, Earl of Wessex, the Queen's brother, took possession of the crown, which King Edward is said to have, previously to his death, granted him, and he was now consecrated King, "on the Twelfth Day," the day of the royal funeral, putting on his own head the insignia of his new dignity, at Lambeth. While this powerful noble maintained his authority as King, Editha's position as Queen Dowager was doubtless respected.

Editha's estates were very numerous, and scattered about in nearly every county of England, so that her generous mind had many opportunities of exercising private as well as public beneficence. Even after the Conquest, Queen Editha appears to have possessed, in some instances, the right of transferring her property: she is mentioned in Domesday, as having bestowed several parcels of land, in dower, upon one Ailsa, who had married the daughter of Wluard, probably one of her attendants, and also as having granted eight hides of land at Firle, in Sussex, to the foreign abbey of Greystein. Editha was, in general a great benefactress to the Church, and especially to Sarum; a grant was made by her, after she became a widow, to the Church of St. Mary. The following extract is copied from the records in the Bodleian Collection, of that act of royal munificence: "I, Editha, relict of King Edward, give to the support of the canons of St. Mary's Church, in Sarum, the lands of Sceorstan, in Wiltshire, and those of Forinanburn, to the Monastery of Wherwell, for the support of the nuns serving God there, with the rights thereto belonging, for the soul of King Edward."<sup>2</sup>

It has been asserted by some, that Editha was permitted by the Norman Conqueror to retain peaceably all her possessions for life, and that on her decease they reverted to the Crown. This is not, however, a correct statement, as some years before the death of Editha, King William despoiled her of all her rich territories, and amongst the number Martock and Chewton Mendip, which were in the King's hands at the time of the Norman survey.<sup>3</sup> When the survey was taken, the Earl of Brittany had also seventy-eight hides of land in his own possession, and ninety hides held under him, all of which had belonged to the widowed Editha.<sup>4</sup> Among other possessions, of which the Queen was deprived by William, was the Manor of Richmond, in the parish of Cambridge, which had formed a part of her large dowry, the whole of which was given by the Norman King to Alan, Earl of Brittany and Richmond.<sup>5</sup> Martock, in Somersetshire, which had been taken by King William from Queen Editha, was given to Eustace, Earl of Boulogne, who had married Goda, Edward the Confessor's sister. Twiverton, in Somersetshire, is thus

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church; and that temple of chastity, that dwelling of virtue (the King) is honourably interred in the place appointed by himself."

<sup>1</sup> Dart's Westminster Abbey.

<sup>2</sup> Philipp's Account of Old Sarum.

<sup>3</sup> Collinson.

<sup>4</sup> Lysons's Cambridge.

<sup>5</sup> Idem.



named in Domesday Book: "This land Alfred held of Queen Eddid. Now the Bishop holds it of the King, as he says."

The supposed generosity of William, if at all shown towards Editha, does not appear to have extended to her mother Githa, Godwin's widow, who, through fear of so powerful an enemy, quitted England in 1068, an affliction, doubtless, deeply felt by her daughter. Githa, who was immensely rich, and at this time much advanced in years, had survived the deaths of her five gallant sons, all slain in the battle-field; she had before that been, as it would appear, a spectator of the catastrophe which deprived her husband of life; and after beholding Editha, her daughter, during eighteen years a queen in dignity, but a melancholy and unloved wife, witnessed her contented retirement to the condition of private life. The ambition of Harold, and his subsequent defeat and death, were her crowning sorrows; and after living two years in continual fear of King William, Githa retired to St. Omers, where her daughter Gunilda had assumed the religious veil, or to Bruges, where, it appears, that lady died in 1087; a fact ascertained by an epitaph discovered some years since, in the church in which Gunilda's remains were deposited. No sooner had the widow of Godwin departed from England than William the Conqueror seized on her immense landed possessions, amounting to 39,600 acres,<sup>1</sup> and distributed them among his Norman followers.

Queen Editha survived her husband nine years, spent principally at Winchester. During her residence there, she is said to have been a spectator of the procession to the Cathedral, when Walker was about to be consecrated Bishop of Durham, which drew from her the remark, "We have here a noble martyr!" So affected was she by the sight of that excellent prelate's appearance, with his snow-white hair, rosy countenance, and extraordinary stature; for her previous experience of the mutinous disposition of the people over whom he was about to preside, led her to fear his fate; so literally was this reflection of the Queen fulfilled that it was looked upon, by those who were acquainted with her piety, as a miraculous prediction, for, in 1080, six years after the death of Editha, Walker was severely maltreated by the Northumbrians, and, at length, put to death by them.<sup>2</sup>

Editha expired at Winchester, as is supposed, in the Abbey of St. Mary, about a week before Christmas, in the year 1074;<sup>3</sup> in her last moments, she solemnly affirmed, she had lived during the eighteen years of

<sup>1</sup> Some few years before the invasion of this country by the Normans, Gueda, wife of Godwin, Earl of Kent, in expiation of her husband's treacherous abuses of divers monastic institutions, had bestowed the Manor of Crowcombe, in Somersetshire, on the church of St. Swithin, at Winchester, in pure and perpetual alms; but amongst other depredations which took place at the coming in of the Conqueror, this manor was seized, and fell a sacrifice to private property, King William presenting it to his favourite, the Earl of Morton. — Collinson's Somersetshire.

<sup>2</sup> William of Malmesbury.

<sup>3</sup> Neale says 1073 was the date of this Queen's death, and that it took place on the 15th of the Calends of January, eight years after that of her husband. Roger of Wendover says the date was 1074.



her union, as though no such tie had existed ;<sup>1</sup> in consequence of which asseveration, the following epitaph was composed in Latin for this Queen. "She sprung of an ancient house, lived godly, entered into marriage a chaste virgin, and into heaven a chaste spouse."<sup>2</sup>

If William the Conqueror did not spare Queen Editha's possessions in her lifetime, he showed much honour to that Queen after death, and the title of *Regina* was assigned to her in almost every entry of her name in the Domesday Book. William took care that the funeral obsequies of Editha should be performed in a manner befitting her royal dignity :<sup>3</sup> by his orders the Queen's remains were removed with every royal honour from Winchester to Westminster, having been previously placed in a coffin covered with plates of silver and gold ; on their arrival they were deposited by the side of St. Edward the Confessor.

A splendid tomb or shrine "of delicately wrought gold and silver, and of admirable beauty," was soon afterwards erected at the express command of William over the remains of the royal pair. That they had one common tomb appears from the charter granted on this occasion, in which King William, after bestowing one hundred pounds of silver to complete the building of the abbey, adds : "From respect of the great love which I had for the renowned King Edward himself, I have caused the tomb of him, and his queen placed beside him, to be marvellously overlaid with smith's work of artificial beauty in gold and silver."

Not long after the offering made by King William at the tomb of St. Edward, miracles were said to be wrought there, of which the first was when Wulstan, bishop of Worcester, was required by the Conqueror to resign his see. The prelate answered that he had received his staff from St. Edward, and would resign it to him alone. Going to his tomb, Wulstan struck it with his staff, which adhered to it ; nor could it be separated by any prayers or hands than those of the prelate, its owner.

Edward the Confessor was canonized by Pope Alexander the Third, A. D. 1161, at the solicitation of King Henry the Second, who was induced to request this by his favourite, Thomas à Becket ; and it was appointed that St. Edward's festival should be kept throughout England on the 5th of January, and his translation on the 13th of October ; this last being to commemorate the solemn translation of the King's body on that day, about two years from the date of his canonization, and its removal into a higher tomb, which had been prepared for it by the English monarch's directions, a new shrine being also made on the occasion at the request of Becket.<sup>4</sup> Upon opening the coffin, which was then done with much solemnity at midnight, the body of the King was found incorrupt, and his dress was taken off as a precious relic, and made into three embroidered copes by Abbot Lawrence ; also the ring that had been given to St. John the Evangelist was taken off and given to the abbey. The royal corpse was afterwards re-wrapped up and deposited in its new tomb, October 13th, 1163, in presence of King Henry the Second, St. Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, and many bishops, abbots, and

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed, William of Malmesbury, Neale.

<sup>2</sup> Malmesbury.

<sup>3</sup> Gough.

<sup>4</sup> Brit. Sancta.

persons of distinction, who attest the incorrupt state in which the royal remains and the garments in which they rested were found.<sup>1</sup> On that same day a book of St. Edward's life and miracles, written by Ailred, Abbot of Rievaulx, in Yorkshire, was dedicated and presented to King Henry the Second, and at the same time a bull was issued by Pope Innocent the Fourth to settle the ceremonial of the anniversary of the festival of St. Edward.<sup>2</sup>

When the church was rebuilt the remains of the Queen of Edward the Confessor were transferred from the north to the south side of St. Edward's shrine, and Henry the Third ordered that a lamp should be kept burning perpetually over the tomb of Queen Editha "the Good."

<sup>1</sup> The surname of Confessor was given to St. Edward from the bull of his canonization issued by Pope Alexander, about a century after his death. — Lingard.

<sup>2</sup> In 1247, King Henry III. received a present from the Knights Templars in the Holy Land (attested by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and other bishops of that country) of a small portion of the blood of our Saviour shed at the Crucifixion. On the anniversary of King Edward's translation, October 13th, King Henry went in person, on foot, in solemn procession, from St. Paul's to Westminster Abbey, carrying this gift in a crystal vessel, elevated above his head, under a canopy, his arms supported by priests, attended by his nobility, who had been summoned on this occasion, with bishops, abbots, monks, and an innumerable multitude of persons, and offered it to God, St. Peter, and Edward the Confessor. The Bishop of Norwich celebrated high mass on this occasion, and pronounced on all attending the solemnity one hundred and forty days' indulgence. A sumptuous feast was also given at the adjoining palace. In 1297, King Edward I., to show his respect for his namesake-saint, offered at his shrine in Westminster, the chair, sceptre, and crown of gold of the Scottish kings.—Brit. Sanc.

After the coronation of King James II. the tomb of Edward the Confessor received some damage by an accident. The coffin, being of wood, bound with iron, was broken into a hole about six inches by four, near the right breast of the corpse, which was examined by Mr. Taylor on St. Barnabas's Day, 1685, by putting his hand into the chasm and drawing from under the shoulder-bones a crucifix, richly enamelled and gilt, on it the figure of Christ crucified, and an eye above casting a ray on him. On the reverse, a Benedictine monk, and on each side of him

A P  
A H

these Roman capitals: — on the right limb, Z A X; on the left, A C. The

cross was hollow, as if to enclose some relic; the upright part four inches, the transverse three. This was attached to a chain of pure gold, twenty-four inches long, the links oblong and curiously wrought, the upper joined by a locket composed of massy knobs of gold, and on each side were set two large red stones, supposed rubies. The examiner drew the head to the hole, and found it sound and firm, as were also the teeth and a list of gold, about an inch broad, surrounding the temples. There were also white linen and gold-coloured flowered silk, that fell to pieces on being touched. These were shown to the Dean of Westminster, Dr. Dolben, Archbishop of York, and Dr. Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, and at length deposited with the King, and the coffin secured with a new one bound in iron.

## EDITHA "THE FAIR."

The father of Editha—Godiva, wife of Leofric—Wealth and power of the Earl of Coventry—The famous legend considered—Leofric's munificence to the Church—The lines in the painted window—Godiva's donation of gems and goldsmith's work to Coventry Abbey—Algar, the father of Editha the Fair, flies to Wales—Marries his daughter to the Welsh Prince, Griffith ap Llewellyn—Nest, his first wife—Her sons—Griffith ap Conan and his wife Angharad—Violent contentions of the Welsh and English—Restoration of Algar—Harold pursues the Welsh—Defeats them—Lays siege to and burns Ruddlan Castle—Editha the Fair taken prisoner—Death of Griffith—Harold marries his widow—Hereford destroyed and re-fortified—Harold's pillars—His breach of promise to Adeliza—Harold becomes King—The battle of Hastings—The search for the body—Editha the Swan-necked—The Recluse of Chester—Eddeva Dives—Her possessions seized by the Conqueror—Stortford in Hertfordshire—The tomb discovered.

EDITHA the Fair was the daughter of Algar, the third Earl of Chester and Coventry, and grand-daughter of Leofric the Third, husband of Godiva, so famous in traditional story. The title of Earl of Warwick and Earl of Leicester were more than once borne by the noble representatives of this family, but they are more commonly spoken of as Earls of Mercia.

Godiva, the grandmother of Editha, appears to have been sister of the first Queen of Ethelred the Unready; both were daughters of Earl Thorold, Sheriff of Lincolnshire, the founder of Spalding Abbey. Leofric was a warlike and powerful chief, who, in 1057, led an army in defence of Ethelred against the Danish King, Sweyn.<sup>1</sup>

The great wealth and power of Leofric, and the liberality of both himself and his wife Godiva to the Church, secured them the good repute of the monkish chroniclers. Perhaps the legendary tale of Godiva's ride through the silent streets of Coventry is not altogether a poet's fiction: the manners of the time were still rude and coarse, and a penance of any sort for the good of the Church was considered a worthy act. That Leofric granted many advantages to the city of Coventry, to his benevolent consort's prayers, is very probable; and in memory of the

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<sup>1</sup> Some years ago the seal of the Earl of Mercia, Alfric or Leofric, was discovered in digging a bank near Winchester, and was found to bear the following inscription:—"† Sigillum Alfric Al." The figure exhibited on the seal holds the sword with which the earls were installed in their new dignity. The head of Alfric is also encircled with a diadem similar to that borne by King Ethelred on his coins,—a proof of his high dignity. This noble was among the first to assent to the tribute called the Danegelt.

delivery of the citizens from oppressive enactments, the effigies of Leofric and Godiva were long to be seen in a window in the old church of Trinity, at Coventry, in which the Earl holds in his hand a charter, inscribed with lines which might have given rise to the legend—

“I, Leurich, for love of thee  
Doe make Coventry toll free.”

Godiva, on her own account, was a great benefactress to the city, and bestowed much wealth on the monastery there, which had been founded by Leofric and Godwin jointly. She showered on the monks jewels and ornaments, “having sent for skilful goldsmiths, who, with all the gold and silver she had, made crosses, images of saints, and other decorations.” The value of the jewels bestowed on Coventry Abbey are said to be inestimable; and on her death-bed the Countess bequeathed a precious circlet of gems, which she wore round her neck, valued at one hundred marks of silver (about 2000*l.* of our money), to the image of the Virgin in Coventry Abbey, praying that all who come thither would say as many prayers as there were gems in it!<sup>1</sup>

Leofric died in 1057, and was succeeded in the Earldom of Mercia by his son Algar, whose family consisted of two sons, Edwin and Morcar—names which occur frequently in the history of the continued struggles of the times—and of two daughters, Editha, sometimes called Edgifa, and Lucia.

The year after his accession to the paternal inheritance, Algar was outlawed by King Edward, the Confessor, but soon afterwards he recovered his earldom by the help of Griffith ap Llewelyn, King of Wales, and the Northmen. To return this well-timed favour, the hand of Editha, the beautiful daughter of Algar, was afterwards bestowed by the Earl on the Welsh king.

Ranulf, or Nest, as she is more frequently called, was the first Queen of Griffith ap Llewelyn, and had borne to him three children, Meredith, Ithel, and Agnes. She was daughter of Alfred King of Man, and the Isles, and after the death of her first husband, a King of Ulster, had married Conan, king of North Wales, son of Jago ap Edwal. Her son by these second nuptials is known in history as Griffith ap Conan, and was born and educated at Dublin. This prince was a remarkable person in his times, and has been thus quaintly described:—“Griffith in his person was of moderate stature, having yellow hair, a round face, and a fair and agreeable complexion, eyes rather large, light eyebrows, a comely beard, a round neck, white skin, strong limbs, long fingers, straight legs, and handsome feet. He was, moreover, skilful in divers languages, courteous and civil to his friends, fierce to his enemies, and resolute in battle; of a passionate temper, and fertile imagination.” To him the Welsh people were indebted for a reform in their minstrels and national music. The mother and grandmother of Griffith being natives of Ireland, “the land of harps and harmony,” they derived from them some of the best tunes, better performers, and a higher order of instruments. This King also built castles and churches, planted trees, orchards and

<sup>1</sup> Saxon Chronicle, Fl. Wigorn, R. Wendover.



gardens, and cultivated the soil. Maintaining peace with his neighbours, he appointed his sons guardians of the frontiers, and the petty princes repaired to his court for protection.<sup>1</sup>

The Welsh monk, to whom we are indebted for the Life of Griffith ap Conan, thus describes his Queen Angharaud, whose name is even at the present day held in honour in Wales:—"She was an accomplished person. Her hair was long and of a flaxen colour, her eyes large and rolling, and her features brilliant and beautiful. She was tall and well-proportioned, her leg and foot handsome, her fingers long, and her nails thin and transparent. She was good-tempered, cheerful, discreet, and witty; gave advice, as well as alms, to her needy dependents, and never transgressed the laws of duty."<sup>2</sup>

Overtaken by blindness in his old age, Griffith devoted himself to religion. Perceiving he was approaching the hour of dissolution, he sent for his sons, and gave his last directions, his Queen Angharaud being present. After a variety of bequests to the place of his birth and the churches he desired to advance, with those religious men who officiated in them, he bestowed his blessing on his sons,<sup>3</sup> foretelling the various fortunes of each, and the character he should support, enjoining them to combat their enemies with resolution and constancy, as he had himself done to show them an example. To Angharaud he bequeathed one-half of his personal estates, with two portions in land, and the customs at Aber-menai. To his daughters and nephews, who were also present, he appointed a sufficient legacy for their maintenance.<sup>4</sup> At the time when Griffith ap Conan died, A. D. 1136, he had attained his eighty-second year: he was interred on the left side of the great altar at Bangor.<sup>5</sup>

At the period of Editha's marriage with the step-father of this Griffith he was very young; he was about fourteen when she was married to Harold, and with his half-brothers and sisters lived in state at the castle of Griffith ap Llewelyn, at Rhuddlan.

<sup>1</sup> Yorke's Royal Tribes of Wales; Sebright MSS. Life of Griffith ap Conan.

<sup>2</sup> Angharaud's father was Owen ap Edwyn, Lord of Englefield: her great-grandfather Grono was founder of the tribe which bore his name. The tribe which derived its origin from Griffith ap Conan was ranked the first of the *five royal tribes of Wales*. The fifteen common tribes were all of North Wales, and their respective representatives, forming the nobility, were lords of distinct districts, and always bore some hereditary office in the palace; it being one of the laws of King Howel Dha that the Court of Wales should possess twenty-four great officers.

<sup>3</sup> Angharaud had a numerous family. Three sons bore the names of Owen, Cadwallader, and Cadwallo; and five daughters, of whom one was married to Griffith ap Rhys, King of South Wales, one of the ancestors of Owen Tudor. This high-spirited princess, who was called "Gwenlian," a term equivalent to "white linen," heading an army in her husband's favour, was taken prisoner in the battle and put to death. Her sister Susanna married Madog ap Maredudd; and Maryed, the offspring of their union, espoused Jorwerth Drwyndurn, by whom she had Llewelyn the Great. — Yorke's Royal Tribes of Wales.

<sup>4</sup> Rhys, brother of Griffith, having been taken prisoner by the English in 1053, was, by Edward's orders, put to death at Balandune, and his head sent to the King, then holding his court at Gloucester.

<sup>5</sup> Yorke's Royal Tribes of Wales.

When Algar sought assistance from Griffith ap Llewelyn, the commander sent by King Edward against their united forces was Harold, who, destined afterwards to become the husband of the young bride of the Welsh king, was to the end of his career his most mortal foe. He pursued the Welsh into their mountain fastnesses, inured his soldiers to similar hardships as that hardy people, and spared no pains to conquer so resolute and so dangerous a foe to the English.

Throughout Griffith's life, even after Algar had recovered his earldom by the tame acquiescence of King Edward, that prince never ceased attacking and annoying the country, out of which every precaution was taken in vain to keep him. Ruthless and savage, and glad of any excuse to contend against England, Griffith was still fighting for Algar when they laid waste together the English borders, and approaching within two miles of Hereford, encountered Ranulf, Earl of Hereford, whom, with his forces, they put to flight. Having entered the city, they burnt the minster, and slew seven of the canons in their attempt to defend it, levelled the walls, and fired the city. Many noble persons were put to death by the combined armies, and others carried off captive, the conquerors returning into Wales laden with their spoils. Harold's orders at this time were to assemble all the forces of the kingdom at Gloucester. At the head of the army the son of Godwin advanced as far as Snowdon; but hearing that Griffith and Algar had retreated into North Wales, he returned to Hereford, leaving a part of his army to keep the country in awe. He took this opportunity to rebuild the walls of Hereford and fortify the city. Meantime he negotiated a peace with Griffith, which has been esteemed dishonourable to that prince. It stipulated that Algar should be freely pardoned, without making any compensation for the damages done or expenses caused by the war. On this the Earl returned to Chester, and afterwards repaired to the court of Edward, from whom he obtained a confirmation of his pardon and dignity, A. D. 1058.

Griffith, husband of Editha, afterwards openly violated the peace he had made with the King, by an inroad into Herefordshire, when the Bishop of Hereford was slain at Glastonbury, as well as the viscount or sheriff of the county, and many other persons. Again, however, peace was restored by the mediation of Harold and the Earl of Mercia.

In 1063, Algar, who had again forfeited, once more recovered his earldom.

The patience of the Confessor having been at length exhausted by these repeated incursions, he determined to utterly subdue the rebellious Welsh; and once more employed the son of Godwin as his general. At the head of a large army, Harold arrived in North Wales, having taken his measures with such expedition and good order, as nearly to surprise Griffith in his palace at Rhuddlan. Scarcely had the Welsh king effected his escape, with a few attendants, to one of his own ships, which set sail instantly and placed him beyond the reach of his enemies, when Harold and the English appeared before his castle gates; and such was the mortification of Harold at his escape, that he burnt the royal residence, and set fire to every ship and vessel left in the harbour. If Editha, at this disastrous epoch, was the companion of Griffith's flight, she must soon after have

fallen into the hands of Harold. That chieftain returned to Bristol, where he fitted out a new fleet, and sailed round the Welsh coast. His brother Tostig, meanwhile, had marched into North Wales, where Harold landed, and they joined their forces for the final destruction of the unfortunate Welsh. These were driven out of their last retreats, and forced to sue for peace. Without their King, having no means of defence, and destitute of provisions, they could hold out no longer; they renounced their oath of allegiance to Griffith, and gave hostages to Harold for the secure payment of their ancient tribute. The triumphant Harold commemorated this occasion by erecting several stone pillars, each of which bore the pompous inscription, "HIC FUIT VICTOR HAROLDUS!"<sup>1</sup>

A. D. 1064. Griffith returned, the summer afterwards, to North Wales, where he landed, and endeavoured to raise a violent opposition to Harold, who was then in South Wales, part of which he had subdued. Some disaffection, however, had sprung up among the people, who, though fear had influenced them when they renounced their fealty in favour of the English, did not now welcome their King as he expected. Far from rallying under his standard, they listened to the instigations of Harold, and put their brave monarch to death, whose head, with the prow of the vessel in which he had returned, they sent to the son of Godwin.<sup>2</sup> "The idol of his people and terror of his enemies," as Griffith has been termed, fell thus ignominiously at the close of a thirty-four years' reign. He was renowned for his skill in government, ability in war, and those amiable manners which had commanded the affection of all who knew him.

After Griffith's death, Harold married Editha the Fair; their nuptials took place A. D. 1065,<sup>3</sup> and on the chief quitting Wales, Editha accompanied him as his wife.

Harold had been married before, but the name of his first wife is unknown. On her death, he had contracted to marry Adeliza, one of the daughters of William the Conqueror, who had aimed thus to unite his family to one whom Edward, who was childless, designed as his successor. Harold, when he married Editha, and broke through his promise to William, did it in the hope of strengthening his interest at home; for by this match he bound the two powerful Earls, Edwin and Morcar, the brothers of Editha, and with them the English, their adherents, to espouse his cause, and from this time the son of Godwin openly aspired to the succession. Tostig, Harold's brother, had been so tyrannical in his rule over the Northumbrians, that they rebelled, and he was forced to fly. Edwin and Morcar had taken part in the insurrection, and the former had been elected in the place of Tostig. Before the engagement, Morcar, knowing the generous temper of Harold, endeavoured to justify his own conduct, representing how unworthily Tostig had acted, and even urging that such conduct could not be supported even by a brother, without sharing in the infamy attached to it; that the Northumbrians were willing to submit to Edward, but only under a leader who would respect their rights; "that they had been taught by their ancestors, that death

<sup>1</sup> "William of Jumièges gives an account of Harold's victory in Wales.

<sup>2</sup> Yorke's Royal Tribes of Wales, Warrington.

<sup>3</sup> Ordericus Vitalis.



was preferable to servitude, and had taken the field determined to perish rather than suffer a renewal of those indignities to which they had so long been exposed; and they trusted that Harold, on reflection, would not defend in a brother that violent conduct from which he himself, in his own government, had always kept at so great a distance." This vigorous remonstrance was accompanied with such a detail of facts, and so well supported, that Harold found it prudent to abandon his brother's cause; and returning to Edward, he persuaded him to pardon the Northumbrians, and to confirm Morcar in the government.<sup>1</sup> This moderation gained the affections of the people.

On the death of Algar, in 1065, Edwin succeeded, through Harold's interest, to the earldom, and thus the two brothers had considerable authority in the country.

Edward the Confessor, soon after dying, Harold, without any formality, snatched the crown of the realm, which he is said, like his predecessor, Harold Harefoot, to have put on his head with his own hands, at Lambeth: he was afterwards crowned at St. Paul's. The ceremony<sup>2</sup> of Harold's coronation is one of the subjects represented on the Bayeux tapestry. In this celebrated specimen of female art, one man offers him the crown, another a battle-axe. Harold appears on his throne, with the globe and cross in his left hand, and a sceptre in his right. On his right hand stand two men who are presenting to him a sword, and Stigand, the Archbishop, is standing on his left. The inscriptions are: "Here they gave the crown to King Harold: here sits Harold, King of the English, Stigand Archbishop." There is no mention made of Editha, but most likely she shared in the coronation honours. Harold, on some of his coins, is represented with a diadem of pearls which he bears on a helmet. Although Editha is not styled "*Regina*" in Domesday Book, her regal rank is proved not only by her immense possessions, but by her having a chaplain, and by her also having for a tenant "a man of noble birth."<sup>3</sup>

Editha must have been more than ordinarily remarkable for personal beauty. She is always termed "the most beautiful Editha:"<sup>4</sup> the Domesday Book calls her Eddeva "Pulchra," and Eddeva "Facra:" even the Normans attest her remarkable beauty. Throughout the Domesday Survey, Harold is never mentioned as king; his wife, therefore, would not be likely to be designated as a queen. Another reason for this omission is obvious. Harold had been contracted to the daughter of William, and had broken his faith. The Conqueror could not forgive the insult, and would not acknowledge Harold or his wife to be legitimate heirs of the throne. Some writers say that William bitterly reproached Harold for his perfidy; others state that the young Princess

<sup>1</sup> Turner, Hume.

<sup>2</sup> History of Lambeth Palace, Turner, Selden.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Henry Ellis, who says truly, that there was so short a time "between the battle of Hastings and the Conqueror's distribution of forfeited lands, that we cannot wonder to find every mention of a wife of Harold omitted in the Domesday returns."

<sup>4</sup> Jumiège. Saxon Chronicle.



of Normandy was dead at the time when Harold espoused Editha the Fair.

Under whatever circumstances Editha had become Queen of Harold, whether with or without her consent, after the death of her turbulent husband Griffith, to whom she was united by her father's policy, and who was much older than herself, she did not enjoy the regal honours of the English sway for more than a few months. Harold fell at Hastings within a year after his becoming king, and of all his glory and his valour nothing remained but a mangled corpse, sought for on the battle-field by two monks, who, unable to identify it, besought the aid of Editha the Fair, or the Swan-necked,—a personage about whom historians differ so widely, that it is impossible to pronounce positively whether she was the beautiful Queen herself, or a favourite of Harold's, whose beauty had gained her the same title as distinguished the consort of the monarch.

The mother of Harold is said to have offered its weight in gold for her son's body, and every possible effort was made to discover it amongst the slain. If it had really been found, the legend could scarcely have existed of the unfortunate King having been borne by secret friends from the field, his wounds healed by their care, and becoming afterwards a solitary hermit in a cave on the banks of the Dee, near the Abbey of St. John's at Chester, disclosing at length, on his death-bed, the fact of his identity. Equally uncertain must be the story of Editha the Swan-necked finding his body.

Queen Editha the Fair was at all events in London after the fatal battle, whither her brothers marched in great haste, to persuade the Londoners to advance them to the kingdom. Dreading the treatment their sister might receive from the hands of the Norman Conqueror, these Earls sent her from London to Chester,<sup>1</sup> which was a part of their own territories. Some say she was sent to West-Chester or Winchester. She resigned her regal rank from that time, and passed the rest of her life in obscurity. This prudent conduct did not, however, disarm the vengeance of William. "Eddeva Pulchra" was also known as "Eddeva Dives," from the great amount of her property; and the broad lands of the widowed Queen were seized by the successful Norman. These amounted to 27,600 acres.<sup>2</sup> Her fee in Cambridgeshire alone<sup>3</sup> was considered of sufficient value to form part of the noble reward bestowed by William upon Alan, first Earl of Richmond; and thus deprived of her rich inheritance and possessions, the widow of Griffith and Harold was compelled to seek the cloister as an asylum for her closing existence, not only as a place of safety, but a means of securing even a subsistence. A talented authoress of our own times,<sup>4</sup> in writing of Queen Editha, states that "the convent to which she retired, the date of her death, her place of burial, are alike unknown; and the record of her broad lands, and the fame of her beauty,

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed, Domesday Book.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed, Florence of Worcester.

<sup>3</sup> Among these estates was the house and lands known by the name of Harold's Park. Harold received from his property in the manor of Waltham 36*l.*, in the time of King Edward the Confessor. — Ogborne.

<sup>4</sup> Miss Lawrence.

are all that now remain to us of Editha the Fair." One single line, however, preserved in Leland, informs us that the widow of Harold, after having lived through the greater part of the reign of William the Conqueror, deprived of regal dignity, stripped of lands and estates, the survivor of her parents, of two husbands and brothers, and of her namesake, Editha the Good, the widow of Edward closed a life of vicissitude and trial, in piety and peace, and was buried *and worshipped as a saint*, at Stortford, in Hertfordshire.<sup>1</sup> About twelve years ago, some workmen of that town, being employed in making preparations for an interment near the font of the church, came upon an ancient vault, exactly underneath it, constructed of rubble, and supposed to be as old as the Saxon times. This vault is considered the repository of the last remains of Editha the Fair, wife of the Saxon King Harold.

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<sup>1</sup> "S. Aldgytha sepulta est in Storteford." (St. Algitha was buried at Stortford.) — Leland.

THE END.



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